

VOLUME VII, NUMBER 4, FALL 2007

CLAREMONT

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A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship

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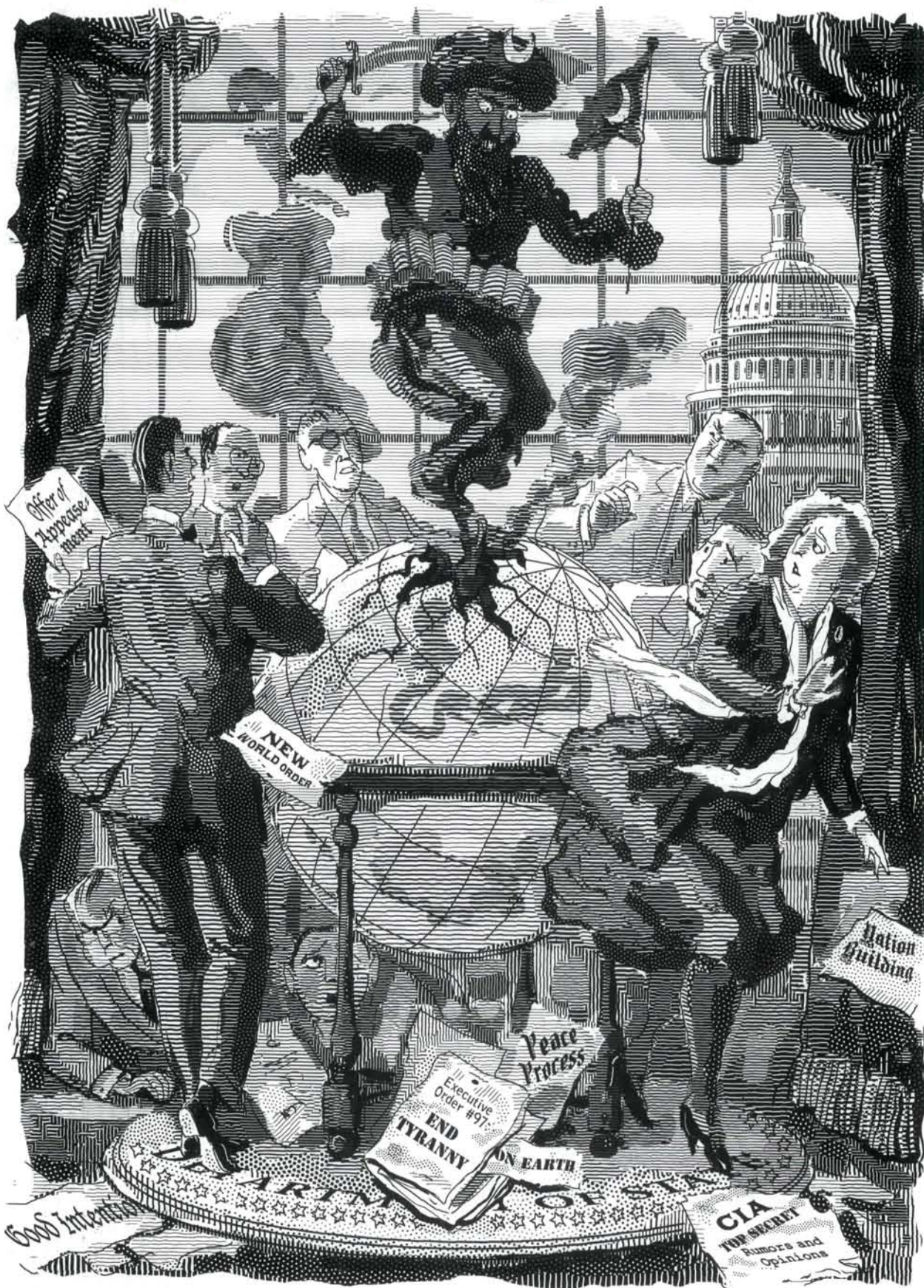
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Essays and Reviews by

Angelo M. Codevilla, Mark Helprin,
Charles R. Kesler, and Harvey Sicherman

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FORCING THE SPRING

by Charles R. Kesler

WHEN BILL CLINTON DELIVERED HIS FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS in January 1993, he reached for a metaphor to describe the progress he was about to visit upon a country newly liberated from the Republican doldrums. His campaign had already run through quite a few such tropes and his presidency would soon exhaust more, ranging from '60s tunes like "Teach Your Children Well" and "Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow" to that famous bridge to the 21st century he was always building, or rather thinking about building.

Eschewing civil engineering on this occasion, however, Clinton turned for inspiration to, of all things, gardening. The metaphor he hit upon was "forcing the spring." This is a hothouse technique for forcing bulbs to germinate ahead of season. His plan was to accelerate the pace of politics, to override the natural tempo of political change. Modern American liberalism has always wanted to hurry us into the future, so that we won't have time to think if the future on offer is actually possible or not, desirable or not. Logically, after all, the imagined future may be possible but not desirable, desirable but not possible, or neither possible nor desirable—in addition to the combination that its proponents want to persuade you is the sole one, that the liberal future is eminently possible *and* desirable, so much so that it is almost inevitable.

Modern liberals, in other words, like to obscure the difference between change and improvement. Marketing executives like to instill the same confusion when they trumpet new needs and products. A change can be for better or worse. If you keep that in mind, you will be disposed to weigh proposed changes, to deliberate about their advantages and disadvantages. That will eventually make you a conservative, not in the prevailing political sense necessarily, but in the prudential sense of someone who wishes to preserve the goodness of existing arrangements against the changes (or so-called improvements) that actually make things worse, and sometimes even against real improvements whose attendant costs are too high.

Yet someone selling a handsome new cell phone would be happy if you thought his gewgaw better because it was new. At least the phone, however, is a real product that can be compared to existing models. The marketing department eventually has to answer to the market. Liberals, by contrast, are selling the future, a product that by definition is never in stock but soon to be shipped. If new is synonymous with better, and every change is an improvement, then next year's future is guaranteed to be better than this year's. In short, liberals don't want you to weigh proposed changes; they want you to *embrace change*.

Take, for example, the Democratic proposals for what is euphemistically called health care reform. In fact, their proposals have very little to do with improving the quality of medical care actually delivered in America's hospitals and doctors' offices, and very much to do with changing the control over medical spending and regulatory authority. The point is not to heal the halt and the lame but to tax those who already have health insurance to pay for those who don't. The point is not to make the blind see but to blind everyone to the increase in governmental power that will result from these prescriptions. This was clearer back in 1993, when the bulbs were sprouting early and Hillary Clinton was in charge of her husband's health care reform task force. As czarina of all health care, she planned in detail how the federal government would solve the "crisis." But the plan—and the crisis—fizzled when the details proved too much even for a Democratic Congress to swallow. She learned from her mistakes. Instead of using the plan to show the nature of the change needed, Hillary now trusts change to show the nature of the plan needed. The details will come later, after the country has agreed on the need for—change.

OR CONSIDER THE DEBATE OVER THE IRAQ WAR. THE DEMOCRATS vow to end the "surge" and bring our troops home, or more likely to a place in the Middle East to be named later. For they know that the United States cannot afford to leave the region alone. Nonetheless, they call for Peace Now, hoping that change will bring respite. The Republicans are right to deny that the Democrats have a thought-through policy for Iraq. Hoping things get better is not a policy.

But the GOP has its own looming problem. Sticking with the surge buys time but little else. What comes after the surge? The answer is the 2008 elections, which the party will lose, and deserve to lose, if it doesn't separate itself from the administration's stand-pat case for the war. Are we there to make Iraq democratic, to protect our interest in regional stability regardless of whether Iraq is democratic, or to achieve victory (please describe) in the war on terrorism? None of the Republican presidential contenders has yet answered that question satisfactorily. It's not enough to reject the liberals' notion of change for change's sake. Conservatives have to prove that they can reason their way to an improved policy on Iraq, as on other issues. And they need to do so soon, before the primaries are over effectively in February or March. This is one time when it makes sense to force the spring.

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CORRESPONDENCE

PROMOTING DEMOCRACY ABROAD

In his worthy analysis of the Bush Doctrine through the eyes of two generations of neoconservatives ("Iraq and the Neoconservatives," Summer 2007), Charles R. Kesler hits the nail on the head in noting a paradox: the policy's chief flaw is not "thinking too highly of democracy but not thinking highly enough of it." Thinking highly enough would force two realizations that demonstrate why the Bush Doctrine became futile as a national security strategy once it was transmogrified into the Democracy Project.

First, the liberties democracy treasures undermine the central security premise of the doctrine. Terrorists thrive in a free society—something hard experience should by now have taught us. The 9/11 attacks may have been conceived in Afghanistan, but they were extensively planned and executed in Hamburg, San Diego, Sarasota, New York, and elsewhere in the democratic West. Witness, too, the accelerating jihadist violence in the United Kingdom and throughout democratic Europe. This doesn't necessarily mean we should

not promote democracy; there are a variety of good reasons to export our values. But in the current environment, where threats come from transnational terror networks which have no territory to defend and cannot be defeated in the traditional military and diplomatic ways, it deeply affects how crucial democracy-promotion is to our security (it's not), and how much effort and sacrifice should thus be expended on it (not much).

Second, those same liberties, amounting to what Kesler aptly describes as the "high and difficult calling [of] republicanism," are inimical to the fundamentalist Islamic culture aspired to by Iraq—or, at least, by influential Iraqi leaders cultivated by the administration, such as Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (of the Dawa Party), and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim (leader of the Iran-modeled Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which has recently dropped the "Revolution" for cosmetic purposes). The administration misses this because it confounds democracy with popular elections and conflates it with freedom. Elections do not a democracy make. There is an ethos of true democracy that cannot co-exist with Sharia principles—principles so revered in Iraq they were enshrined in the new constitution that the administration helped draft. Moreover, it is presumptuous, to say the least, to assume that once freedom grips the Islamic world, this will translate into democracy as we understand it, thus eradicating jihadism's root causes. The very concept of freedom in Islamic cultures—i.e., the choice to submit to the will of Allah as expressed in His system, in which mosque and state are not separated—is close to the opposite of what it means to Westerners. Islamic culture is resistant to core democratic values not because it fails to comprehend them

but because it doesn't want them. And it is the unpleasant truth that the tenets on which that resistant culture is based inevitably breed some terrorists.

All of this is most unfortunate because the Bush Doctrine, as the president originally articulated it, sans the Wilsonian gloss, really is the blueprint for suppressing jihadists and their state sponsors.

Andrew C. McCarthy
Foundation for Defense
of Democracies
Washington, D.C.

Charles Kesler brilliantly outlines the gap between the vision of a liberated Iraq launching a wave of democracy throughout the Arab world, and the grim reality. It is not just Iraq that has soured the neoconservative agenda. Freedom's foray into the Middle East has gone amiss. Lebanon's fledgling democracy is under sustained assault. And in Palestine, elections briefly gave power to Islamists, before they dragged their society into the brutal abyss of civil war. Few in the West wish to remember it now, but this was Algeria's condition, too, 15 years ago. In that country, not to mention elsewhere in the region, a strongman's repression seemed the only bulwark against savage anarchy. Western calls for a return to these old Middle East ways are the kind of political expediency that passes for realism these days, especially when someone else suffers for the sake of our political tranquility. Sadly, today's self-proclaimed realists forget that 9/11 was a side effect of their strategy.

As Kesler rightly recognizes, two important factors are missing in the Bush Administration's overall democracy agenda: first, the recognition that civil society is "essential to a healthy democracy," and second, that there exist "other forms of government between

the best and the worst—forms that might be more congenial to many countries capable of something better than tyranny but incapable, at least now, of the best sorts of republicanism." A regime that would treat its subjects more humanely and would spend its national resources for the benefit of its citizens was not unattainable in Iraq—and it could have served both the national interest and a long-term project of advancing democracy. The mistake was not in believing that democracy could eventually take root in the Arab Middle East—rather it was the expectation that Iraq would achieve in a year what Western democracies attained in decades and centuries. To assume that a healthy civil society would emerge once Saddam was gone was not only naïve. It ignored the lessons of democracy's third wave, whose successes in Eastern Europe were never matched in Russia. Why would Iraq be different? What hope could there be to find a civil society and a culture of rights where Saddam had taken care to destroy every last semblance of opposition to his rule? Those crucial components, not a constitution and elections, had to be fostered and patiently nurtured until they could stand on their own. It may be too late now.

And yet to assume that our democratic principles do not apply to the Arab world for some cultural or meta-historical reason is to deny the universality of rights that the free world takes for granted, and to concede that culture can permanently override rights we deem innate to human nature itself. It is not excessively idealistic to continue to proclaim our belief in human rights' universal reach and our patient support for their advance abroad.

Emanuele Ottolenghi
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WINNING THE MIDDLE EAST

In his essay "Winning the War of Ideas" (Summer 2007), Robert Reilly mischaracterizes Radio Sawa, saying it has demoted the war of ideas "to the battle of the bands." He is correct that Radio Sawa attracts millions of listeners each day by broadcasting the most popular Arabic and Western music. But the article fails to mention that Radio Sawa dedicates an average of seven hours each day (in addition to breaking news coverage) to accurate and objective news and information. Listeners throughout the Middle East tune in to hear the latest news about the Middle East, the U.S., and the world. The network's newscasts and discussion programs focus on human rights, democracy, freedom of speech, and the rights of women—topics not heard on other radio stations.

Critics act as if it is novel to use music to lure audiences and to fill in the daily radio format. The highly successful use of American jazz on Voice of America (VOA) during the Cold War was instrumental in winning hearts and minds and in cementing friendships overseas. Similarly, Sawa provides listeners access to most popular contemporary music. The feedback from the region is overwhelmingly positive.

The audience may initially tune in for the music, but they stay for the news. VOA continues to use its "music mix" to round out its formats. The alternative is to have "dead air" between news broadcasts; to have numerous repeat broadcasts; or to do all news all the time in vernacular languages, a very expensive undertaking.

Fortunately, Radio Sawa has come up with a winning combination. According to international research firms such as ACNielsen, Ipsos, and others, Radio Sawa's unique playlist and comprehensive news coverage have an estimated weekly reach of 20 million listeners. These surveys report that nearly 70% of Radio Sawa's audiences find the station's news to be

credible. By any standard of radio measurement, these are impressive numbers.

Deirdre Kline
Director of Communications
Middle East Broadcasting
Networks, Inc.
Alhurra TV / Radio Sawa
Springfield, VA

Robert Reilly's essay is well-intentioned but brings starkly into focus the kind of mistakes that prevent people in the West from understanding the threat of radical Islamism.

I will restrict myself to two points. First, he writes that the U.S. must export the universal truths of the Declaration of Independence. Reilly takes for granted that someone from a different religious tradition is going to see life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as "God-given inalienable rights." If you speak with a Muslim about God-given rights, he is going to ask to see the appropriate Koran verses. Islam itself means *submission* to the will of God—the opposite of liberty. As for the pursuit of happiness, the Ayatollah Khomeini once said memorably that there is no joy in Islam and that the only games permitted are to prepare for war. Even very different clerics don't talk about Islam as a source of happiness.

Second, Reilly writes:

Radical Islamists reduce God to his omnipotence, concentrating exclusively on His unlimited power, as against His reason. God's "reasons" are unknowable by man. God rules as He pleases. There is no rational order invested in the universe upon which one can rely, only the second-to-second manifestation of God's will. This view results in anti-rationalism which, in turn, nourishes irrational behavior.

This is shockingly ignorant about Islam. Whether or not the inner, secret reasons of God are possible

to know, the Islamic tradition lays down a complete program of laws—forbidden, permitted, advisable, inadvisable things to do. The idea that Islamists are anarchists who think anyone can interpret God as he wishes is nonsense. They believe there is a rational order, God ordained it, and they know it. They define the other side in anarchical terms because it bases itself on human reason, which they regard as inferior and thus irrational.

Barry Rubin
Global Research in International
Affairs (GLORIA) Center
Herzliya, Israel

I have repeatedly pointed out to Bob Reilly that he is in error quoting my son (as he did again in his recent CRB essay) as saying, "Britney Spears's 'music represents the sounds of freedom.'"

Although Reilly is correct in noting that my son is a Naval Academy graduate, he has never been a Britney Spears fan. He certainly has never believed Spears's music represents the sounds of freedom. His remark was made about American popular music in general and reflects the role this music (including Willis Conover's classic VOA jazz program) played in the downfall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Why does Reilly continue to repeat his flawed quotation? I can only assume that he is still bitter over the role I played in his replacement as director of the Voice of America in 2002. This bitterness remains despite the fact that I helped him to get employment in the Defense Department's policy office, a position that enabled him to retire from the federal government with generous benefits earlier this year.

It is no coincidence that the only communications jobs he has ever held have been at the expense of the federal taxpayer.

Kenneth Y. Tomlinson
Middleburg, VA

Robert R. Reilly replies:

Even if we accept Ms. Kline's statistics of seven hours of news per day, Radio Sawa would still be pumping out pop music for more than 70% of its broadcast time. If that is not a "battle of the bands," I don't know what is. It is hardly a "mischaracterization" of Radio Sawa. Anyway, this is no way to win a war of ideas.

It is no surprise that Radio Sawa has gained large youth audiences by playing pop music in parts of the Middle East, such as in Amman, Jordan, where it has an FM transmitter. As a commercial enterprise, I am sure Sawa would be judged a success, but not in terms of U.S. public diplomacy. As a senior Jordanian journalist, Jamal Nimri, told me: "Radio Sawa is fun, but it's irrelevant." Can this be a surprise to any adult? We do not teach civics to American teenagers by asking them to listen to pop music, so why should we expect young Arabs to learn about America or democracy this way?

The purpose of the news in the old VOA days was to hook the listeners so they would listen to the rest of the (non-musical) programming that contained the substance of what we were trying to communicate. Listeners tuned in for the news and stayed for the rest. Now, as Kline informs us, they tune in for the music and stay for the news. As an advertiser might say, they kept the sizzle but forgot the steak. News by itself was never considered the be-all and end-all that it has now become.

As for Mr. Rubin's comments, because Islam does not contain the teaching that all men are created equal, I would hardly think it is naturally receptive to the notion of God-given inalienable rights. As for his second point, I suggest he revisit the 9th-century suppression of the rationalist Mu'tazilites by Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil, and then re-read al-Ghazali, whose works were the bedside reading of Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Ghazali's embrace of irrationality, along with the denial of causality

and thus, necessarily, of secondary causes (laws of nature), has its roots in a theology that holds God to be pure will, unconstrained by reason. God is not only above reason; he is without it. In this view, there may be an order in the universe but it is certainly not "rational." (At the same time, Rubin seems to be saying that Islamists think human reason is irrational. How then can they know, as he suggests they do, that "there is a rational order"?)

Islam is a religion of laws. I see no contradiction between a god of pure will and his laying down a lot of rules. Pure will gets to do anything it wants to, even if inconsistent. But what is the status of those laws in their relationship to reason? As the chief ideologue of radical Islamism, Sayyid Qutb, observed, "Every time the Qur'an states a definite promise or constant law, it follows it with a statement implying that the Divine will is free of all limitations and restrictions, even those based on a promise from Allah or a law of His. For His will is absolute beyond any promise or law." In other words, arbitrary. Rubin is right in saying that radical Islamists do not think that just "anyone" can interpret the Koran, but he fails to point out that they think *only they* are given that privilege in an exercise of *ijtihad* (effort), with which they sweep aside generations of tradition and Islamic jurisprudence that speak against their novel program of suicide bombings and slaughter of civilians. In that sense, they are anarchists. The theology of their anarchism is contained in Abdullah Azzam's statement that "terrorism is an obligation in Allah's religion."

With respect to Mr. Tomlinson's accusation, it is not I but Tomlinson himself who is the source for the quotation from his son. Here is the original NewsMax report by journalist Wes Vernon:

"You know, Britney Spears does the lead commercials for Pepsi," the BBG chairman told NewsMax.com. "She's very mainstream. Now I don't claim to be an

authority on this music. But I do know this thing has been a real success."

Tomlinson quotes his son, a graduate of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, saying, "'Tell the oldsters to chill out because her music [Britney Spears's] represents the sounds of freedom.'"

When Tomlinson first disputed this quotation, I did what he should have done and checked with the source, Wes Vernon.

Vernon wrote me that Tomlinson had indeed quoted his son in this way: "I stand by that quote. It was accurate." Though I suggested he do so, Tomlinson for some reason has failed to contact the author to try to correct this story, letting it stand as a matter of record. Perhaps that is just as well because Vernon informed me: "With Tomlinson's permission, I recorded the interview."

AMERICAN PATRIOTISM

I am delighted, genuinely delighted, to read a calm, thoughtful, indeed most generous review of my book *The Intellectuals and the Flag* written by a conservative ("A Left-Handed Salute," Summer 2007). In the past 20 years or so I have become accustomed to ill-informed, dismissive abuse in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Weekly Standard*, and *Commentary*—castings of anathema (he is still a leftist!) rather than serious appraisals of my work. By vivid contrast, Wilfred McClay takes the trouble to read my book, indeed, to read it thoroughly and sensitively, and for this alone I am grateful.

This said, I hope it is not caddish to respond briefly to his criticisms. First (and I oversimplify his point, to save space), he charges that my "view of American history is so bleak...and [my] contempt for the shallowness of American patriotism at present is so deep, that there hardly seems to be anything worthy of one's sacrifice." To this I would reply that I am generally

enamored of the Revolutionists, Lincoln, the Progressives, and the New Deal, the expansion of the franchise and equal rights, and the movements of the '60s, to mention only some high points, and if I have scanted these (and others) in the essay that gives this little volume its title, sooner than excavate phrases and sentences that rebut his point, I would prefer to say that I hope to be mindful of the need not to be churlish toward a history that has occasioned the sacrifice of so many.

Second, my metaphoric tribute to those who fought the hijackers of Flight 93 means only, in a manner perhaps extravagant, to distinguish symbolic affirmations of patriotism from the actual, active thing. McClay is probably right that I lean rather too heavily on the example. And he is right that readiness to sacrifice is the decisive criterion.

Finally, he maintains that my diatribes against George W. Bush are "poisonous and quite unhinged." I disagree. To me, the character of the president, the damage he has done to (what passes for) patriotic virtue, and the dangerous willingness of the conservative movement to promote him and his policies against the calls of reason, are part of the central political problem of the last decade, which, by the way, I consider in my forthcoming book, *The Bulldozer and the Big Tent*. On the question of the president's nature, I hope to persuade Professor McClay to change his mind.

Todd Gitlin
Columbia University
New York, NY

Wilfred M. McClay replies:

I greatly appreciate Todd Gitlin's letter, and, at the risk of seeming too irenic, and failing thereby to uphold my assigned role in the culture wars, I think his first two points are well taken. I hope it is not caddish of me, though, to wish that his list of admirables in American history was a bit longer, and included some of the non-political

people and institutions that have made this country such a wellspring of inventiveness and economic dynamism, the place where so much of the rest of the world wants to be. Most Americans don't connect their patriotism with politics, and indeed, this fact is reflected in their distaste for naked partisanship of any sort, and their instinct that, for the most part, religion and politics are the two subjects they'd rather not hear discussed in public—even if Gitlin and I both would sometimes wish it otherwise, on both counts.

On President Bush, however, I hold my ground. Not that I think Gitlin's book was exceptionally bad in this regard. Not at all, and I raised the issue only because the rest of his book was so admirably independent-minded, and made such good points about the loss of civility and productive debate in our public life. And there were excellent parts of the book that I could not discuss in the review, such as a terrific essay on David Riesman, someone whom both Gitlin and I admire. The parts on the president were a striking departure. I do not think Bush's administration is above criticism. But I do not recognize it, or him, in Gitlin's description.

It is worth pointing out, too, that many of the most trenchant criticisms of the Bush Administration have come from the right, as the recent debate over immigration reform showed vividly, and as a reading of conservative blogs and journals (including the *Claremont Review of Books*) would show. The president has never gotten a free pass from conservatives, and he has repeatedly made it clear to them that he is not "their" guy, just as he did in the immigration bill. Not that it did him any good, and not that liberals gave him any credit for the generosity (wrongheaded, in my view) that he showed in supporting and pushing the bill, in spite of the fierce opposition of his own "base."

In any event, I'll read with great interest Gitlin's forthcoming book, as I do everything he writes. But I strongly suspect I'll disagree.

CREED AND CULTURE

Only a scarred veteran of the immigration wars can appreciate the many subtle ways in which Brian Kennedy's editorial ("Making Americans," Summer 2007) was excellent. Of course, he is absolutely right to say that immigrants (albeit, as he notes, "in manageable quantities") can be assimilated, but only if American institutions are rescued from multiculturalism and returned to an affirmation of the American creed.

But he's wrong, alas, to say that "if we cannot get this right, the rest won't matter." There are nations that have survived the complete repression of any type of national "creed," for example the Baltic Republics or Catalonia, where even the national language was under official attack. Conversely, the importation of liberal ideology and institutions has frequently failed, for example in Mexico or in the former British colonies of Africa.

The truth is that nations are ethno-cultural entities. Culture matters, which is why Kennedy's emphasis on the America creed is valid. But ethnicity seems to matter also, in ways that are not well understood. Perhaps it's a question of culture in a deeper sense than ideology. Whatever it is, it means that there is a point at which a critical mass of sufficiently diverse immigrants will prove more than even the most America-affirming institutions will find "manageable."

Peter Brimelow
VDARE.com
Washington, CT

Brian T. Kennedy replies:

Peter Brimelow has fought many battles on the immigration front and one has to admire his dedication to trying to get the argument right. When I said that it was important for new immigrants to adopt the American Creed—the self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence—I was pointing to that one common set

of principles that can bind us as a people. There may well be ethnic and cultural differences among us. But the American success story is about overcoming these differences by means of these principles. They are what set us apart from the other examples Mr. Brimelow mentions.

I am always curious about the arguments centering on culture. Do proponents mean here that certain ethnic groups cannot be good citizens? I hope not. If they mean that certain cultures are problematic when it comes to assimilation, I couldn't agree more. These problematic cultures reject America's first principles. Here radical Islam comes to mind since, on its face, it rejects both the principle of human equality and our belief in religious freedom.

Of course Muslims can be good Americans. But they must also reject Islamic jihad and the subjugation and killing of the infidel if they are to be fellow citizens. Absent this we have to doubt, to put it mildly, a Muslim's ability to become an American faithful to our principles. This assimilation problem is well advanced in Western Europe where there are no first principles. The European problem of Islamic immigration and assimilation will be difficult, if not impossible, to solve. But arguments of culture, to the extent that they are crude racial or ethnic markers, should hold little sway in American political life.

COPYRIGHT LAW

Mark Helprin deserves credit for pushing back against the sentiments of many of my academic colleagues—and file-sharing students—who want to abolish copyright ("© Inequity," Summer 2007). That said, I fear that by arguing that the length for copyrights should be extended indefinitely, he pushes too hard in the opposite direction.

His main argument for an indefinite copyright is that because the law doesn't term-limit ownership of land, chattels, or money, it shouldn't term-limit copyrights either. But not all tangible property

laws work as Helprin assumes, and the exceptions are revealing. In the 19th century, governments encouraged bridge-building by giving the builder an exclusive but temporary monopoly over river crossings. Modern law typically gets at the same problem by imposing common-carrier duties on utilities—that is, by making utilities' property rights permanent but not exclusive. Is it better to treat copyrights like land and money, or like bridges and utilities?

Helprin doesn't frame the stakes this way because he thinks the question is simply whether royalties should go to the artist's estate (if the copyright is infinite) or to publishers (if it's not). This view makes sense if perpetual royalties don't shrink opportunities for future artists or choke up the store of common knowledge. Whether or not they do is an empirical question, and one that is extremely hard to answer. But when he assumes perpetual royalties don't restrict future opportunity, Helprin assumes that economic life is extremely static. Until fairly recently, American copyright law viewed economic life far more dynamically—because it was written to secure the natural right to labor as understood by the Constitution's framers.

Helprin dismisses the framers' assumptions and laws because, he says, they couldn't anticipate the knowledge-oriented economy we enjoy today. This is a little ungrateful, for our economy was shaped in large part by laws and policies the framers made to secure the natural right to labor. They appreciated that intellectual property highlights the transformative power of human labor more effectively than any other species of property. They learned from Blackstone that "the right, which an author may be supposed to have in his own literary compositions" is a "species of property," because it is "grounded on labor and invention."

Adapting Locke loosely, every time one artist makes a new work, the law should assume that ninety-nine artists are waiting in

the wings to make something even better. The first artist deserves a copyright to reward his talent and labor, but afterward he should not be able to slow the ninety-nine.

Eric Claeys
George Mason University
School of Law
Arlington, VA

Mark Helprin is in fast company arguing that intellectual property, and literary property in particular, should be liberated from the law of copyright and treated just (or more) like real or personal property (yours in perpetuity). Samuel Clemens made the same case to Congress early in the last century. Unhappily for Helprin, the problems with the position are even greater today than when "Twain" took it.

First, *pace* Helprin, there is the common (and sound) intuition that a published poem is a *different kind of thing* from a house or bearer bond, and that the different forms that "property" takes properly receive different treatment in law.

Second, the copyright clause is an enumerated (and therefore circumscribed) congressional power to create exclusive right in published literary productions for *limited* periods of time. To suggest, as Helprin does, that right-thinking congressional majorities could take "limited" to authorize "infinite" is interpretive casuistry.

Finally (and this is why Helprin has a harder row to hoe than Clemens), it is generally assumed today that copyright is freighted with First Amendment significance—that there is an interest of constitutional dimension in arrangements of words and images passing, at some point, into the public domain. The *locus classicus* of this argument is in the writings of Stanford Law School professor Lawrence Lessig, and in his brief to the Supreme Court in *Eldred v. Ashcroft* (2003). Now it is true that a majority in that case upheld the more or less outrageous "Sonny Bono" Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998, and declined to

craft a rule as to when (as Justice Breyer put it in dissent) "a copyright statute seriously, and unjustifiably, restricts the dissemination of speech." But should Congress be persuaded to engage in the kind of copyright adventurism Helprin advocates, there is little doubt that the Court would bring down the First Amendment hammer.

Helprin is aware of the free speech problem, and tries to escape it by asserting a radical distinction (or disjunction) between "ideas," which should be freely accessible to all, and "art" (a particular arrangement of words, images, or sounds) that should remain under the control of the composer. This won't do at all. "Ideas" often inhere precisely in the arrangement of symbols used to express them, and contemporary copyright law is notoriously used by owners to protect "concepts" (i.e., ideas) from unauthorized use by others. "Ideas" and "art" are inextricably intertwined, and in an era when one restaurateur sues another for serving a Caesar salad too like her own, the First Amendment issues can't be made to go away.

Richard E. Morgan
Bowdoin College
Brunswick, ME

Mark Helprin replies:

Contrary to what these two letters assert, I made very clear in my article that ideas are not subject to copyright. Nor, anywhere, did I endorse perpetual copyright, even if three-quarters of a million postings on the internet say that I did. As an originalist, I accept the Constitution's language and intent, the one crystal clear and the other evidenced in the historical record, both of which clearly rule out perpetuity. I stated this not just once but twice.

I don't know how this could have been misunderstood, unless one reads my further comment that "The genius of the framers in stating this provision is that it allows for infinite adjustment," as calling for an infinite term. Limited and

infinite cannot co-exist as one. Infinite adjustment does not mean infinite extension. That your Barcalounger may be infinitely adjustable does not mean it will take you into other universes. Nor is my wish that Congress extend copyright term "as far as it can throw" a desire for perpetuity, unless we are talking about a different Congress than the one that the last time it extended as far as it could throw nearly broke its head in adding 20 years.

Nor did I write about patents, a completely different animal, although that 20 years is the optimal term is by no means a divine truth. But rather than setting aside arguments that do not apply, better to engage those that do, which are not only the heart of the two letters above but their vulnerable points of collapse. They are Professor Morgan's assertions that "Ideas" and 'art' are inextricably intertwined," and "contemporary copyright law is notoriously used by owners to protect 'concepts' (i.e., ideas) from unauthorized use by others." And Professor Claeys's statement that "every time one artist makes a new work, the law should assume that ninety-nine artists are waiting in the wings to make something even better. The first artist...should not be able to slow the ninety-nine."

To quote § 102 (b) of Title 17 of the *United States Code*, "In no case does copyright protection for an original work of authorship extend to any idea, procedure, process, system, method of operation, concept, principle, or discovery, regardless of the form in which it is described, explained, illustrated, or embodied in such work."

That's the law, but even clearer are the facts that exist independently of the law, namely that concepts and ideas have not been repressed or stunted by copyright, and certainly not by the recent extension of copyright. Where is an example of this? How many books have been written about Pearl Harbor, the Constitution, Shakespeare, racism, education, particle physics, surprise attack, or veal cookery? Is the suggestion that once one is written and copyrighted the field of maneuver

for pertinent concepts, ideas, principles, etc., is somehow locked up? Not according to the law and not according to the obvious facts.

Perhaps misconception in this regard stems from the notion that "Ideas" and 'art' are inextricably intertwined." If they are intertwined, it means that they are two different things, as one thing cannot be intertwined with itself. And of course, because they are different, we have a word for each. Copyright applies clearly and forcefully (see above) to one, and not to the other.

Where does Prof. Claeys get the idea that copyright is a drag on artistic production, or any production? Is he suggesting that Pasternak could not write because Yeats had beaten him to the punch, that Tolstoy didn't write *War and Peace* because *Moby Dick* was copyrighted? I have published 600 books, articles, short stories, essays, newspaper pieces, and the like. Not once in the 47 years in which I have been engaged in this have I even given a thought to someone else's copyright except when quoting a song. Does anyone actually imagine that literary work is like assembling Legos, piling one modularized thing upon another? It isn't. Perhaps the cut-and-paste generations see it that way, for which they should be rigorously held to account by—what else?—copyright law.

And what if there were no copyright? This would not encourage literary fecundity, it would retard it. Because *Batman* may be copyrighted, it means that you can't write it again, or *Batman II*, *Batman III*, *Batman IV*, *The Return of Batman*, *Batman's Brother*, *Batman's Sister*, etc. You are forced instead to do what the letter-writer suggests you are prevented from doing—"making something even better," in this case something else. This is precisely what is done so much that even after hundreds of years of copyright and a decade of the "outrageous" Sonny Bono Act, we are afloat in the richest sea of information and publication that mankind has ever known. There is so much of it, and it grows so fast, that the institutions that are

tasked with keeping track of it cannot keep up. This publication itself is one of (and, naturally, the best of) tens of thousands of mechanisms by which one attempts to float upon the sea of publications and information.

And upon this deep and swelling main are a tribe of people who are convinced that because of the repressive and strangulatory effects of copyright they are in a desert. Their boats are wondrous strange.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICANISM

Needless to say, I am grateful to Randy Barnett for his very kind words about my book *Our Undemocratic Constitution* ("Constitutional Conventions," Summer 2007). Much, of course, could be said about his various criticisms that accompanied his kind words, but I want to concentrate on only one of them. He chastises me for apparently privileging a "democratic" Constitution over the distinctly "republican" Constitution actually drafted by the framers. After all, Article IV guarantees to all states an explicitly "Republican [and not Democratic] Form of Government." At the very least, this presumably means no hereditary monarchs and a commitment to government by elected representatives instead of "direct" rule by the people (such as through initiative and referendum).

But, of course, older theories of republican government included a variety of distinctly more controversial propositions, including the inability of anyone without sufficient property to participate in government, even as a voter; not to mention, in certain theories of republicanism, the defense of slave labor as a way of providing necessary leisure for the quite literal ruling class. Or consider John Adams's statement that republican government requires that "public Passion must be Superior to all private Passions. Men must be ready, they must pride themselves, and

be happy to sacrifice their private Pleasures, Passions, and Interests, nay their private Friendships and dearest connections, when they Stand in Competition with the Rights of society." Benjamin Rush once wrote of the duty of schools to create "Republican machines."

I have no doubt at all that Professor Barnett, a noted libertarian, has no tolerance for slavery, and I doubt that he would endorse the restrictions on suffrage that were present at the time of the founding, whether based on property, gender, religion, or race. I also doubt that he would endorse the republicanism defined by Adams and Rush.

What counts as "republican" or "democratic" government is what political theorists call an "essentially contested concept." One concept of democratic government, to be sure, is unconstrained majoritarianism, which Barnett rightly criticizes. Perhaps I should have titled my book *Our Too Undemocratic Constitution*, in order to acknowledge that I myself would endorse deviations from pure majoritarianism. But I continue to wonder how many of the Constitution's undemocratic features really capture Prof. Barnett's affections. Take a relatively minor example that could, nonetheless, provoke a decidedly major constitutional crisis, given the "right" conditions: should there be a deadlock in the electoral college, the president would be chosen by the House of Representatives on a one-state/one-vote basis, with Vermont's single representative having the same power as California's 53 representatives. I have yet to find any defenders of the electoral college who are willing to defend this peculiar feature of the system. And, of course, the book presents many other examples of what I believe

are unjustifiable deviations from the country's basic commitment to what might be called "democratic republicanism."

Sanford Levinson
The University of Texas
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Austin, TX

THE TRUTH ABOUT LEO STRAUSS

In addition to thanking those who wrote letters defending our book, *The Truth about Leo Strauss*, from the criticism aimed at it by the CRB's reviewer (Correspondence, Summer 2007), we wish to comment briefly on one set of remarks in his reply to the letter writers. For the record, we, along with the letter writers, believe that he seriously misrepresented our argument. He completely missed our purpose in the book, and in doing so revealed little understanding of the problem of philosophy and the city.

But we pass over these larger and ultimately more important issues to address his charge that there were "serious lapses from the minimal demands of academic precision." He refers first to an example he used in his original review, the details of which we cannot repeat here, but urge the reader to consult ("Guide for the Perplexed," Spring 2007). The "serious lapses" to which he refers were two errors—lapses if you will—in proofreading. In one case an ellipsis was omitted; in the other, a set of brackets. In one case we omitted something; in the other we added something for emphasis and point. (In a second printing we, of course, will correct these and other typographical errors.) Contrary to the

reviewer's insinuations, we believe that a fair-minded, less angry reading of the passages in question, in the context of the texts they were discussing, will show that nothing was distorted as a result of these typographical errors.

We are also taken to task for "attributing to Strauss, without evidence, an absurd statement that he was supposed to invoke frequently." The reviewer may consider the saying to be "absurd," but it is something we heard Strauss say in class on more than one occasion.

Catherine H. Zuckert
Michael P. Zuckert
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, IL

Steven J. Lenzner replies:

My criticism of the Zuckerts' manner of quoting was not (as their letter appears to suggest) stylistic but substantive. I objected to their employing tendentious half-quotations that serve to transform Strauss into someone more interested in championing causes than in understanding them.

With regard to Strauss's "often stated" claim that as an émigré he was not qualified to speak on American politics, I was not unaware of the possibility that he may at times have said this in class or elsewhere. I merely regard it as impossible that he made such a statement seriously. In his essay "On Classical Political Philosophy" and elsewhere, Strauss emphasized the "transferable" character of political knowledge:

While all political life is essentially the political life of this or that community, "political science," which essen-

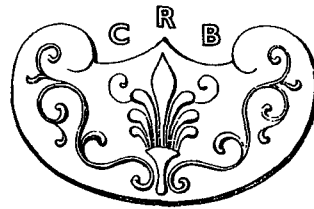
tially belongs to political life, is essentially "transferable" from one community to any other. A man like Themistocles was admired and listened to not only in Athens, but, after he had to flee from Athens, among the barbarians as well; such a man is admired because he is capable of giving sound political advice wherever he goes.

Strauss spent an academic year in Israel, and those months enabled him to describe that country's character in a very public and political letter: "I taught at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for the whole academic year of 1954–1955, and what I am going to say is based exclusively on what I have seen with my own eyes." What then of the more than 20 years of his firsthand observations in the United States? The Zuckerts must find all the more puzzling the confidence with which Strauss commented on political life in, e.g., Athens, Sparta, Rome, and Florence.

Finally, let me emphasize that my chief objection to the Zuckerts' book has nothing to do with their scholarly lapses, except insofar as these point to the attitude with which they undertook their task. In adopting the dubious cause of making Strauss's thought politically innocuous, the Zuckerts come perilously close to doing the impossible—robbing that thought of its charm.

Correction:

The date given in Angelo M. Codevilla's "Intelligence Failures" (Summer 2007) on which Colin Powell spoke to the United Nations should have been February 5, 2003.



THE TROUBLE WITH LIMITED GOVERNMENT

Essay by William Voegeli

A QUARTER CENTURY AGO PRESIDENT Ronald Reagan declared in his first inaugural address: "In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.... It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the federal establishment and to demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted to the federal government and those reserved to the states or to the people." In 1981, the year of that speech, the federal government spent \$678 billion; in 2006, it spent \$2,655 billion. Adjust that 292% increase for inflation, and the federal government is still spending 84% more than it did when Reagan became president—in a country whose population has grown by only 30%.

To put the point another way, if per capita spending after 1980 had grown at the rate of inflation, federal outlays would have been \$1,883 billion in 2006 instead of \$2,655 billion. The 41% increase from 1981 to 2006 is considerably lower than the 94% increase in real, per capita spending in the previous 25 years from 1956 to 1981. In the last two decades, the federal establishment grew steadily, rather than dramatically. Nonetheless, Reagan's pledge to curb the government's size and influence has hardly been fulfilled. Inflation-adjusted federal spending increased in every year but two over the past 26 years.

Military spending is a minor factor in the overall growth of government. It was 23.2% of federal spending and 5.2% of gross domestic product in 1981. Those percentages peaked in 1987 at 28.1% and 6.1%, respectively. Defense spending fell steadily thereafter, and was just over 16% of the federal budget and 3% of GDP from 1999 through 2001. Since September 11, defense spending has climbed to 20% of the federal budget and 4% of GDP. Despite the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, both figures are

lower than they were at any point during Jimmy Carter's presidency.

The engine driving the growth of government has been "human resources"—the Office of Management and Budget's category that includes Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, along with other programs for health, education, veterans, and income security. Spending on human resources in 1981 was \$362 billion, slightly more than half (53.4%) of all federal outlays. That proportion declined to slightly less than half (49.7%) by the time Reagan left office in 1989. But it turns out there was a peace dividend after the fall of the Berlin Wall: national defense spending dropped from 26.5% of federal outlays in 1989 to 16.1% in 1999. That savings—a tenth of the budget—migrated to human resources, where spending climbed to 60% of outlays by 1995. The category has stayed above that level ever since, reaching almost two-thirds of federal spending (65.6%) and 13.1% of GDP in 2003.

The numbers confirm what every despondent conservative already knows. Since Reagan's stunning victory in 1980, conservative journals have annihilated forests to print articles about excessive government spending. Conservative think tanks have produced sweeping plans for reducing the welfare state. Republicans occupied the White House for 18 of the 26 years after 1980, and held a Senate majority for 16½ years and a House majority for 12 years. Yet the result is a federal establishment bigger and more influential today than in 1980.

Reagan was elected president 25 years after the first issue of *National Review* declared its intention to "stand athwart history, yelling Stop." This was an amazing ascent for a political movement that started out, in the words of *NR*'s first editorial, "superfluous" and "out of place." In the 25 years since Reagan's election, however, conservatives determined to scale

back the welfare state might as well have been standing a respectful distance behind history, whispering "please slow down."

Swedenization

IF CONSERVATISM HAS A FUTURE, THOSE who want to fashion it need to acknowledge and understand this stunning defeat. In *National Review* last year Ramesh Ponnuru said the "real crisis" is that, while a conservatism whose "central mission" does not emphasize the fight against Big Government is inconceivable, a "political coalition in America capable of sustaining a majority" for that mission is unimaginable. Conservatism, in other words, can have a purpose or it can have a prospect. It cannot, apparently, have both.

This political problem will only become more acute as the challenges of governance become more severe. One yardstick may help conservatives feel a little better about themselves. In 1981 federal spending was 22.2% of GDP; last year it was 20.3%. This measure hovered in a very narrow band for the whole era, never exceeding 23.5% or falling below 18.4%. Adding expenditures by states and localities confirms the picture of a rugby match between liberals and conservatives that is one interminable scrum in the middle of the field. Spending by all levels of government in America amounted to 31.6% of GDP in 1981, and 31.8% in 2006.

Conservatives, though, can't take much solace from fighting Big Government to a draw. Looking back, the dynamic growth of the American economy after 1982—real per capita GDP was two-thirds higher in 2006 than in 1981—offered a great opportunity to reduce the relative size of the public sector. This economic vigor meant that more people had more money to spend on their own health, education, and welfare, presumably enabling the govern-

ment to spend less for such purposes. It also meant that government spending could have grown robustly and still expanded more slowly than the economy, leaving the public sector to absorb a significantly smaller portion of GDP in 2006 than it did in 1981. Even this modest achievement eluded conservatives.

Republicans abandoned their promises to abolish the Departments of Energy and Education. Efforts to zero-out smaller and supposedly vulnerable agencies like the National Endowment for the Arts accomplished nothing. The only important victory here was the 1996 law abolishing Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), a victory that may turn out to be hollow. The *New Republic* celebrated rather than lamented the 10th anniversary of AFDC's demise, arguing that because of the law, "welfare-bashing has lost its political resonance... [and] welfare reform has expanded the constituency for activist government. Democrats now have more political room to fight Republican austerity—and to propose, in its place, a stronger safety net."

Looking forward, government spending as a percentage of GDP is about to rise dramatically. The oldest baby boomers, born in 1946, will be eligible for Social Security's early retirement benefits in 2008 when they turn 62, and become Medicare beneficiaries when they turn 65 in 2011. These two programs, along with Medicaid, accounted for 41% of federal spending in 2006, even before the baby boom cohort had started collecting benefits. All three will increase relentlessly due to the longevity and sheer numbers of Americans born between 1946 and 1964. The columnist Bruce Bartlett estimates that the magnitude of this growth will be "on the order of 10% of the gross domestic product over the next generation even if no new government programs are enacted or current ones expanded." This is the Swedenization of America on auto-pilot.

Blame the Right

MANY CONSERVATIVE COMMENTATORS, in their assessments of these ominous prospects and past opportunities lost, have resorted to finger-pointing. The title of Bartlett's book, *Impostor: How George W. Bush Bankrupted America and Betrayed the Reagan Legacy* (2006), hints at the villain he identifies. *Leviathan on the Right* (2007), by Michael D. Tanner of the Cato Institute, makes "big-government conservatives" and their ideas the culprit.

Though these books were published in the past two years, the blame game has been going on since Reagan was elected. Newt Gingrich famously derided Bob Dole as the "tax collector for the welfare state." Dick Armey said that what "killed us" during the 1995 government

shutdown was that Gingrich and his House deputies were "full of themselves," boasting about the shutdown in advance. President George H.W. Bush was savaged by conservatives for his 1990 tax increase.

In *Dead Right*, published in 1994, David Frum carried the assignment of blame to its logical conclusion. He argued that capitulating to the welfare state is not a betrayal of the Reagan legacy; it is the Reagan legacy.

There was no arithmetic reason that the Reagan program could not have succeeded. Reagan's budgets were wrecked by the inability and unwillingness of the most conservative administration since Coolidge's to resist the rise of social welfare spending... [T]he doctrine was that the welfare state should be allowed to hurtle forward whenever the political cost of halting it was likely to be inconvenient in the shortest of short runs.

There would be many more harsh judgments about how this or that faction betrayed the conservative campaign against Big Government. All such explanations, however, agree on one dubious premise: but for the weakness or hubris of some key player, the conservative project could have succeeded. That premise disregards the central fact—cutting back the welfare state is very, very difficult. Paul Pierson, a political scientist at Berkeley, showed in *Dismantling the Welfare State?* (1994) that Margaret Thatcher had no more success in curtailing Britain's social programs than our conservatives had in undoing ours. As prime minister for eleven years, Thatcher had more leverage to change policy than President Reagan or Speaker Gingrich ever possessed. Pierson concludes, however, that her government "had only modest success" in cutting back individual welfare state programs, while her record in modifying the context of future struggles over the welfare state "was if anything less impressive."

Lacking an appreciation of the challenges they would face, conservatives never developed a political strategy adequate to the task. There was no systematic effort to pare back the welfare state, no disciplined preparation for the inevitable and aggressive counterattacks by interest groups and liberal journalists. Instead, conservatives time and again were shocked to discover that the people who built the welfare state were so unhelpful about dismantling it. Right-wingers fell into long periods of sullen, stupefied resentment, punctuated by frontal assaults that were brief, furious, and futile. Think of David Stockman's crusade to cut spending in 1981; or the 1995 government shutdown, the Pickett's Charge of the Gingrich rebels.

Early on, in the wilderness years, conservatives

had a surer sense of what they were up against. The first issue of *National Review* described conservatism as "a position...unattenuated by a thousand vulgar promises to a thousand different pressure groups." Unattenuated in theory, conservatism in practice has been hemmed in constantly by the fact that the people insist that promises made to them, vulgar or not, must be kept. Robert Samuelson recently wrote, "[M]ost Americans...think that they automatically deserve whatever they've been promised simply because the promises were made."

Ponnuru's Dilemma

AS A RESULT, IT IS MUCH HARDER FOR conservatives to dismantle the welfare state than for liberals to build it. The main impediment to the New Deal was the "legitimacy barrier," the prelapsarian conviction held by many jurists and citizens that government had no rightful business undertaking a whole range of social improvements, no matter how gratifying the beneficiaries might find them. The New Deal overcame—demolished, really—that barrier, and with it the constitutional and political impediments to building the welfare state. That victory, according to James Q. Wilson, not only guaranteed the permanent existence but the permanent growth of Big Government:

New programs need not await the advent of a crisis or an extraordinary majority, because no program is any longer 'new'—it is seen, rather, as an extension, a modification, or an enlargement of something the government is already doing.... Since there is virtually nothing the government has not tried to do, there is little it cannot be asked to do.

After the legitimacy barrier is overwhelmed, the political calculus of how benefits and burdens are apportioned and, crucially, *perceived* strengthens liberals "seeking to extend benefits to large numbers of people" against conservatives "seeking to take those benefits away," according to Pierson. Liberals must worry only about a "diffuse concern about tax rates," a problem they can usually finesse "through reliance on indirect taxes and social insurance 'contributions.'" The conservative project, on the other hand, requires "the imposition of concrete losses on a concentrated group of voters in return for diffuse and uncertain gains." Every cutback necessitates "a delicate effort to transform programmatic change into an electorally attractive proposition," an effort that is in constant danger of being negated by "a substantial public outcry," such as the one against President George W. Bush's Social Security proposals in 2005.



Conservatives have always had to negotiate the trade-offs, inherent in Ponnuru's dilemma, between adhering to the mission and assembling a majority. It hardly suffices to say that Barry Goldwater, the first *National Review*-era conservative hero, favored the mission. "I do not undertake to promote welfare," he announced in *The Conscience of a Conservative* (1960), "for I propose to extend freedom. My aim is not to pass laws, but to repeal them. It is not to inaugurate new programs, but to cancel old ones that do violence to the Constitution, or that have failed in their purpose, or that impose on the people an unwarranted financial burden." Rather than compromise his mission to gain political victory, Goldwater in 1964 went out of his way to tell voters what they *didn't* want to hear.

At the other end of the spectrum, House Republicans kept their majority for eight years after Newt Gingrich resigned in 1998, but the revolutionaries who came to Washington in 1994 to do big things wound up staying around just to be big shots. After the 1995 government shutdown, the mission of the congressional Republican Party shrank steadily, and finally amounted to nothing more than clinging to its majority. In the end, the meagerness of that aspiration negated it. Voters connected the unprincipled personal behavior of thieves and frauds like Duke Cunningham and Mark Foley with the unprincipled political behavior of a congressional majority that spent millions on a bridge to nowhere and billions on a Medicare drug plan to the moon. After the House majority leader, Tom DeLay, declared in 2005 that there was really nothing left to cut in the federal budget, voters concluded, plausibly, that if we're going to have Big Government we might as well entrust it to politicians who don't pretend they oppose it.

Supply-side economics was, in political terms, an effort to break out of Ponnuru's dilemma, to secure a majority without sacrificing the mission. In 1963, Senator Goldwater had voted against the Kennedy tax cuts, saying the

dangers of inflation and deficits required "firm, principled decisions" about spending *prior* to any tax reductions. The "Reagan gambit," as Frum called supply-side economics, was an attempt to reverse the political equation. Liberalism had flourished by making government spending the independent variable and taxes the dependent one: give the people a cluster of attractive and successful social welfare programs, the logic went, and voters will gladly pay the taxes required to support them. Supply-side conservatives tried to make taxes the independent variable and spending the dependent one: give the people a cluster of appealing tax cuts and count on their attachment to them to set spending at the level defined by the resulting revenue stream. To the extent that lower taxes, along with smarter regulatory and monetary policies, strengthened the economy, they would also increase government revenues and make the attainment of revenue-defined spending levels that much easier.

The experience of a quarter century shows that tax cuts have served important purposes, but the cause of scaling back Big Government is not one of them. Fiscal policy-making is an ongoing political science experiment, testing the relative strength of the aversion to taxes, the appetite for government programs, and the feasibility of large-scale borrowing. The results are in and they're not ambiguous: under every set of circumstances, the levels of taxing and borrowing increase to accommodate government spending, to a far greater extent than government spending decreases in order to avoid excessive taxation or deficits.

In David Stockman's bitter but compelling memoir about his embattled years as President Reagan's OMB director, he describes his own reckoning with Ponnuru's dilemma: "The politics of American democracy made a shambles of my anti-welfare state theory...[which] rested on the illusion that the will of the people was at drastic variance with the actions of the politicians." In reality, "congressmen and senators ultimately deliver what their constituencies de-

mand. The notion that Washington...[is] divorced from the genuine desires of the voters... constitutes more myth than truth."

New Deal or No Deal?

MORE RECENTLY, FRUM HAS ARGUED that the GOP might settle for being the "party of less government," content with slowing down the liberal project of bringing Scandinavian-style social democracy to America. The more audacious goal, to be "the party of small government," will not succeed, he says, without an "affirmative small-government vision." As matters stand, however, the small-government vision needs work. Between 1981 and 2006, conservatives made the least of a good situation. If the more difficult years ahead are not going to be a debacle, conservatives need to wrestle with some important strategic questions.

One such question is where to begin. Should conservatives concentrate their next efforts against small but egregiously stupid federal expenditures, or emphasize the huge entitlement programs that are really going to drive the growth of the federal budget? Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma argues that "until American taxpayers can trust Republicans to correctly handle the 'small things,' like Bridges to Nowhere, they will never trust us to handle the 'big things,' like Medicare and Social Security." Robert Samuelson, however, says that while Amtrak wastes \$1.3 billion a year, ending programs like it is "hardly worth the trouble.... In a nearly \$3 trillion budget, even 10 Amtraks are a footnote."

The larger question is where conservatives want to end up. Is the repudiation of the welfare state a prerequisite for a coherent 21st-century conservatism—or a quixotic, self-marginalizing gesture? Conservatives have been ambivalent about that for a long time. Even the first issue of *National Review*, boldly assertive in every other respect, hedged on this point: "Conservatives in this country—at least those who have not made

their peace with the New Deal, and there is a serious question of whether there are others—are non-licensed nonconformists.”

A half century later this question of whether conservatives can, cannot, or must make their peace with the New Deal remains. Conservatives who feel the need to accept it, stress political realities. George Will wrote this year that “the argument about whether there ought to be a welfare state is over.” An argument can be over without being won or lost. Will implies that conservatives will never round up a majority against the welfare state, no matter how sturdy their syllogisms or compelling their evidence. The underlying calculation is that the persuasive argument conservatives can offer in favor of less government will never get a hearing until conservatives make it clear that this argument is *not* a stalking horse for small government—for revoking the New Deal.

If they do allay that fear, however, conservatives can make a Tocquevillian appeal to the voters’ enlightened self-interest: if we’re going to have a welfare state—and we are—let’s go about it as intelligently and soberly as possible. Let’s be measured in our expectations for what the welfare state can accomplish, and clear-eyed in our awareness of the damage it can do. Welfare states, Will says, “presuppose economic dynamism sufficient to generate investments, job-creation, corporate profits and individuals’ incomes from which come tax revenues needed to fund entitlements.” That prosperity requires limiting taxes, regulation, and even government spending. But it requires something deeper: “modalities” that deliver entitlements in ways that encourage rather than discourage “attributes and attitudes—a future orientation, self-reliance, individual responsibility for healthy living—that are essential for dignified living in an economically vibrant society.”

The conclusion toward which such arguments point is that a nation wealthy enough to have a welfare state is wealthy enough to have lots of people who don’t need most of what the welfare state provides. Conservatives who make peace with the New Deal accept the legitimacy of government programs to help the small minority of citizens who are chronically unable to fend for themselves and the larger minority occasionally and transitionally unable to do so. In making this concession, conservatives seek to demonstrate that they wish to modify the welfare state by attacking weak claims, put forward by politically powerful groups on behalf of dubious causes, rather than weak claimants, who are genuinely needy but have little clout.

Furthermore, the undisputed legitimacy of the welfare state obviates the Rube Goldberg financing of it. Blackening the sky with crisscrossing dollars is liberalism’s hedge to keep the prosperous from voting against programs for the poor. Unenlightened self-interest keeps everyone invested in social insurance programs, even those who would come out ahead by self-insuring. By contrast, “If conservatives could design their ideal welfare state, it would consist of nothing but means-tested programs,” says Pierson, which is basically right. In addition, conservatives would welcome “ownership society” programs, such as Health Savings Accounts, Individual Retirement Accounts, and 401(k) plans, which give incentives to people who aren’t poor to provide for their own needs in ways that will keep them ineligible for the means-tested programs.

The rejoinder of the conservative irreconcilables is that such political “realism” rests on a foundation of wishful thinking. Liberals reasonable enough to be swayed by arguments about the moral and material prerequisites of the welfare state wouldn’t be liberals in the first place. Voters corrupted by decades of buying into liberalism’s vulgar promises will never be enlightened enough to see past them. There’s a faint theoretical possibility that one might devise modalities of government entitlements that encourage self-reliance, but liberals’ long head start in defining the welfare state more or less guarantees that this laudable goal will never be realized.

Democrats, for example, crushed the Bush Social Security proposals in 2005 by doing nothing, offering nothing, and saying nothing that even acknowledged the need for entitlement reform. Mickey Kaus argued at the time that if liberals had enlightened self-interest in their repertoire they would have scaled back Social Security benefits *more* than Bush proposed. “Universality is extremely expensive,” he said. Devoting a significant and growing portion of our GDP to mailing “Social Security checks to rich and poor alike” can’t possibly be “the highest and best use” of it. Cogent arguments about the welfare state’s optimal utilization of its allotment of the economy are of no interest whatsoever to liberals who spent decades working to increase that allotment. Any “reforms” of the welfare state that re-privatize any of those GDP points, or lead to any destination other than the public sector’s acquisition of additional ones, are dead-on-arrival overtures.

Rather than wasting time trying to placate implacable liberals, no-peace-with-the-New-Deal conservatives say any critique of the wel-

fare state that makes sense or headway must, ultimately, reestablish a legitimacy barrier. “The New Deal was a genuine transformation,” according to Michael Greve of the American Enterprise Institute, and “if conservatives concede the legitimacy of that constitutional transformation, how can they contest other transformations, past or proposed?” The road to Sweden is paved with sound concessions.

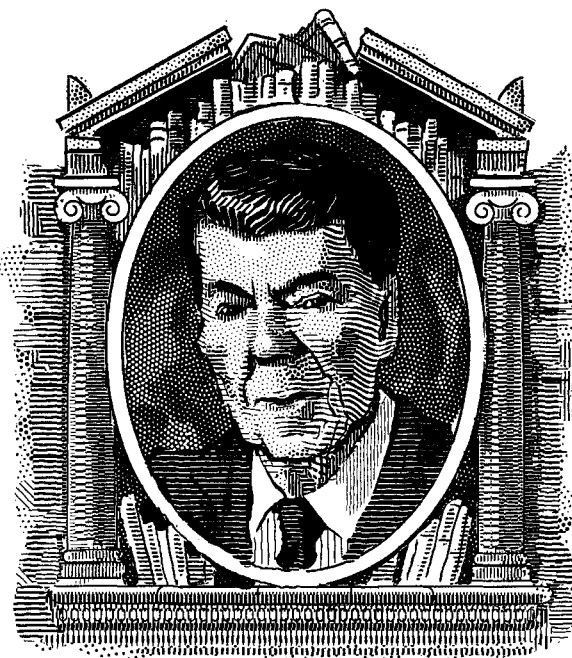
According to this argument, the two goals proclaimed in Reagan’s inaugural address define one mission, indivisible; conservatism will never “curb the size and influence of the federal establishment” without insisting, once again, on “the distinction between the powers granted to the federal government and those reserved to the states or to the people.” The real question for conservatives, then, is not whether to reject the New Deal but *which* New Deal to reject—the one on the ground, the thick roster of activist government programs; or the one in the air, the rhetoric and ideas justifying the perpetual existence and expansion of those programs.

It makes sense for conservatives to attack liberalism where it is weakest, rather than where it is strongest. Liberals sell the welfare state one brick at a time, deflecting inquiries about the size and cost of the palace they’re building. Citizens are encouraged to regard the government as a rich uncle, who needs constant hectoring to become ever more generous. Conservatives need to make the macro-question the central one, and to insist that limited government is inseparable from self-government. To govern is to choose. To deliberate about the legitimate and desirable extent of the welfare state presupposes that we the people should choose the size and nature of government programs, rather than have them be chosen for us by entitlements misconstrued as inviolable rights.

No political strategy can guarantee success. Under no foreseeable set of circumstances will liberals fear giving voters their spiel: we want the government to give things to you and do things for you. Conservatives can only reply that single-entry bookkeeping doesn’t work; every benefit the government confers will correspond to a burden it has to impose. A government that respects citizens as adults will level with them about the benefits *and* the costs. A conservatism that labors to reverse liberalism’s displacement of Americans’ rights as citizens with their “rights” as welfare recipients may not achieve victory, but it will at least deserve it.

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REAGAN AND THE HISTORIANS



THE REAGAN BOOK INDUSTRY IS SHIFTING into high gear these days with several important new perspectives on our 40th president and his statecraft. Midge Decter wrote in 1991 that "[i]t will, one day, take a truly gifted writer, perhaps a novelist, to solve the puzzle of such a man." Edmund Morris essentially tried this approach, and made a fool of himself. The new passel of books adds fuel to the debates over Reagan, though it may be wondered whether the best guide to the man isn't still Reagan himself, in the form of his newly published diaries.

Romantic Imagination

OVERALL, THE FLOOD OF BOOKS IS highly encouraging, especially John Patrick Diggins's *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History*, which, except for the diaries, has attracted the most attention. The great fear of conservatives when the Gipper left office was that the liberal professoriate would "Coolidge" him. And starting with Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign, conservatives got a feeling of *déjà vu* all over again as liberals deplored the Republican '80s in terms strangely recalling Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., John Hicks, William Leuchtenburg, and other historians who had deplored the Republican '20s. So when a board-certified liberal intellectual like Diggins, a professor of history at the City University of New York Graduate Center (he worked down the hall from Schlesinger for many years), comes along and ranks Reagan among the four greatest American presidents (alongside FDR, Lincoln, and Washington),

Reaganites may be tempted to spike the ball, do an end zone dance, and declare "game over."

But not so fast: a closer look suggests that there may be some mischief afoot. At the end of his preface Diggins discloses that part of his purpose is "[t]o rescue Reagan from many of today's so-called Reaganites." Is he trying to pull off a Brinks Job on us? Cause some dissension in the ranks? The author explains subsequently that he has chiefly in mind the dreaded "neoconservatives," such as Vice President Dick Cheney, who led us into the Iraq War. But the book's comparison of Reagan to Lincoln is also politically problematic, since, as Diggins well knows from his own fine writings on him, significant factions on the Right intensely dislike the Great Emancipator. There would be few better ways to undermine Reagan with some conservatives and libertarians than to link Reagan and Lincoln.

Anyone who has read the author's previous intellectual histories will know that he is not a man given to mischievous errands, or to kowtowing to anyone's agenda. His highly original and provocative approach to Reagan breaks new ground in understanding American political culture, and deserves careful reflection. He gets several things absolutely right that have escaped the gaze of other liberals who have written with grudging respect toward Reagan, such as Richard Reeves in his *President Reagan: The Triumph of Imagination* (2005; see "Respecting Reagan," *CRB*, Fall 2006).

The typical liberal line today is that Reagan was right on the Cold War, but his domestic policy was a train wreck. Diggins perceives the fundamental unity between Reagan's domestic

and foreign policy, based in his idiosyncratic—the book rightly says romantic—imagination. And unlike Reeves and even sympathetic writers such as Lou Cannon, Diggins gets Reagan's economic policy correct. He offers an unusual reversal of another familiar theme of the president's critics, that Reagan was a creation of his superb staff work. Diggins flips this around, attributing most of the administration's mistakes and black marks to the staff, who didn't share Reagan's imagination and good judgment.

Yet there are several aspects of this portrait that are arguable or in which Diggins doesn't carry the analysis far enough. For instance, he calls Reagan our "Emersonian President"—and certainly he lives up to everyone's favorite Emerson aphorism that a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. Diggins sees Reagan as emulating Emerson's self-made transcendent theology of a benign cosmos in which evil is an aberration, and there is much in Reagan's brief but frequent religious professions to bolster this identification. But Diggins wants to make him into a crypto-liberal, too:

Far from being a conservative, Reagan was the great liberating spirit of modern American history, a political romantic impatient with the status quo. Reagan's relation to liberalism may illuminate modern America more than his relation to conservatism.... What Reagan sought to do for America has been the goal of liberalism since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment: to get rid of authority, the meddlesome intrusions of controlling institutions, whether of church or state.

Hold it right there, as Reagan might have said in one of his western movies. Diggins's thesis is correct insofar as conservatives are all "liberals" in the 18th-century meaning of the term. The trouble is that he glides over what can perhaps be described as the intellectual civil war over liberalism's meaning that has been raging for more than a century. Suffice it to say that today's liberalism stands for nothing so much as for the "meddlesome intrusions of controlling institutions," which Reagan deprecated as the betrayal of classical liberal principles. To this extent, the president was trying to revive the embattled or attenuated branch of liberalism to which the Right owes allegiance.

This conundrum deepens when we consider Diggins's contention that Reagan disagreed with the founders' understanding of mankind's sinfulness and need for authority. The author is on to something here, but presses the case too far. To be sure, Reagan's gravestone includes the un-conservative inscription, "I know in my heart that man is good." Various aspects of his rhetoric lend themselves to the conclusion that he thought evil an abstract thing—that the evil in the "evil empire" stemmed solely from an alien ideology rather than from any corruption in individual human souls. He showed little perception of the sheer will to power that actuates many political men. There is no doubt that he had a sentimental streak about his fellow human beings, along with an overweening confidence in the force of his own personality (a trait he shared with Winston Churchill). Repeatedly in his diaries Reagan expresses surprise and disappointment that an adversary whom Reagan thought he had mollified with a warm White House visit would go right back out and blast him afresh. Elsewhere in his diaries Reagan notes the presence of individual sin, and offers the judgment that for some evildoers, "h-l is too good for them."

Aside from his lack of interest in the problem of sin, Reagan understood contemporary politics in a way much closer to the founders' constitutionalism than Diggins gives him credit for. Almost alone among modern Republican politicians, he understood the unconstitutional dimension of the administrative state. In a 1979 letter Reagan wrote, "The permanent structure of our government with its power to pass regulations has eroded if not in effect repealed portions of our Constitution." In a 1976 radio address he warned, "We are governed more and more by people we never elected, and who can't be turned out of office by our votes and who want more power than they already have." And in his First Inaugural Address in 1981, Reagan indirectly invoked the Declaration of Independence: "It is time to check and reverse the

growth of government, which shows signs of having grown beyond the consent of the governed." How should we explain his failure or inability to halt or reverse the administrative state's growth? This remains a significant historical problem, but it is beyond the scope of Diggins's work, which is concerned with placing the president in the context of American political culture.

Books discussed in this essay:

Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History, by John Patrick Diggins. W.W. Norton & Co., 512 pages, \$27.95

The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of His Conversion to Conservatism, by Thomas W. Evans. Columbia University Press, 320 pages, \$29.50

The Reagan Diaries, by Ronald Reagan, edited by Douglas Brinkley. HarperCollins, 784 pages, \$35

The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism, by Paul Kengor. Regan Books, 432 pages, \$29.95

The Judge: William P. Clark: Ronald Reagan's Top Hand, by Paul Kengor and Patricia Clark Doerner. Ignatius Press, 400 pages, \$27.95

Transforming America: Politics and Culture During the Reagan Years, by Robert M. Collins. Columbia University Press, 320 pages, \$29.50

Becoming Reagan

DIGGINS'S VIEW OF AN EMERSONIAN figure clashes to some extent with a new book that attempts to explain how Reagan came to be Reagan: Thomas W. Evans's *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of His Conversion to Conservatism*. A lawyer and former adjunct professor at Columbia University's Teachers College, Evans is undoubtedly correct to home in on the G.E. years as the key period in Reagan's political self-education, which the president himself suggested amounted to a postgraduate education in the subject. He traveled to more than 30 states visiting G.E. plants and making sometimes three or four speeches a day. Traveling by train because of his fear of

flying, Reagan read widely in the new conservative periodicals and books, such as the *Freeman*, *National Review*, and Whittaker Chambers's *Witness*.

Evans's book is strange in one glaring respect: while the subject is Reagan's education, his chief focus is the G.E. public affairs operative who hired and squired Reagan, Lemuel Boulware. Boulware is legendary for being one of the first senior executives in corporate America to understand that liberalism's increasing politicization of American life required business firms to become politically "proactive," as we'd say today. He was the rare business executive with real political talent, and he became "a hero of American business" for heading off strikes at every G.E. plant under his watch. Today Washington is crawling with corporate public affairs officers utilizing all the latest media and marketing tools to influence politics. But G.E.'s public affairs strategy and political viewpoint were so novel at the time that they acquired their own label: "Boulwarism."

Among other insights, Boulware realized that corporate political activity needed to take place between elections—not just during election season. This meant educating G.E.'s own employees and the communities where they lived. This is where Reagan came in; he became the star asset in the new communications effort. Boulware, Evans argues, was Reagan's "tutor, sponsor, motivator, and role model," and "Reagan's change in philosophy developed over the entire eight years that he was in [G.E.'s] Employee and Community Relations program." But Boulware's direct influence remains a matter of inference in Evans's narrative; there is little or no mention of Reagan in the corporate documents he references. (Edmund Morris reported the same dry hole in the G.E. archives.)

Although it is correct that this was the key period when Reagan developed his views and began retail political activity, Evans overstates the case that Boulware and Reagan's G.E. years were responsible for moving him from left to right. The Hollywood years in the late 1940s, when Reagan witnessed firsthand the efforts of Communists to infiltrate Hollywood unions, were probably as important to his evolution as the G.E. years. Reagan himself put the genesis of his changing views even earlier, writing in *Where's the Rest of Me?* (1965) that "the first crack in [his] staunch liberalism" occurred during his military service in World War II, when he observed the perverse incentive structure of the civil service bureaucracy.

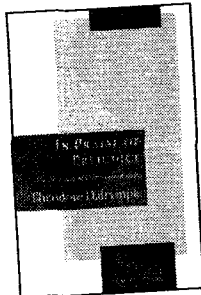
Reagan always discounted the frequent charge that he was the creature or puppet of someone else. He explained how Reagan became Reagan in 1976:

Eventually what happened to me was, because I did my own speeches and did the

IN PRAISE OF PREJUDICE THE NECESSITY OF PRECONCEIVED IDEAS

By Theodore Dalrymple

ISBN: 978-1-594032-02-8 | \$20.00



"Prejudice," wrote Edmund Burke, "renders a man's virtue his habit." How strange that sounds to modern ears! Today, to call someone prejudiced is to relegate him to the lowest rung of intellectual life. But is there anyone who isn't prejudiced? As Dr Dalrymple argues in this brief and

bracing rehabilitation both of prejudice itself and the necessity of prejudice, someone who walks out into the world completely unprejudiced is as helpless as a newborn babe.

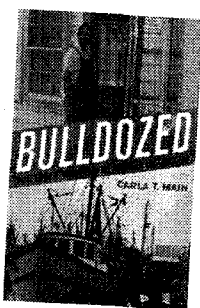
BULLDOZED

'KELO' EMINENT DOMAIN AND
THE AMERICAN LUST FOR LAND

by Carla Main

ISBN: 978-1-59403-193-9 | \$25.95

No domestic policy issue more angers or galvanizes the public than the controversy over eminent domain. Veteran journalist Carla Main delivers an incisive expose on this practice as she traces the history of eminent domain from our Founding to the recent U.S. Supreme Court case, *Kelo v. New*

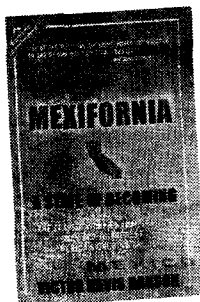


London. Along the way, Main relates the story of the Gore family of Freeport, Texas, and their struggle to hold onto their 56-year-old family business.

MEXIFORNIA A STATE OF BECOMING

by Victor Davis Hanson

ISBN: 1-59403-217-3 | \$17.95



As immigration reform reaches critical mass in Washington, Victor Davis Hanson updates *Mexifornia*, his intensely personal political memoir, and ponders how California, the Southwest more broadly, and indeed the entire nation have been altered by America's hemorrhaging borders. *Mexifornia* is an indictment of those "progressive" ideologues and opportunists behind the policies that fail to integrate aliens into our mainstream and leave our borders unprotected.

research for them, I just woke up to the realization one day that I had been going out and helping to elect the people who had been causing the things I had been criticizing. So it wasn't any case of some mentor coming in and talking me out of it. I did it in my own speeches.

This explanation may deserve a discount—what presidential candidate will want to admit that his views derive from someone else's?—but it is unlikely that he adopted his political outlook because of the influence of Boulware or G.E. Put simply, Reaganism was not Boulwarism.

In Real Time

READERS HOPING TO FIND MAJOR NEW clues to Reagan's peculiar conservatism and character will not receive much help from *The Reagan Diaries*, but careful readers will be able to cross-reference diary entries with other known facts to discover the shrewd and hard-working man that lurked beneath the genial exterior. With the appearance of the diaries, the old charge that Reagan was "lazy and uninformed" will go out the window for good. What's more, there is no indication of a slowdown in either the president's workload or his attentiveness during his second term—in other words, no evidence of the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. The diaries also reveal that he possessed the normal amount of vanity for a high-level politician—a trait he successfully concealed with his self-effacing public manner.

No one expected Reagan to be introspective or philosophical in his diary, and it is likely that he knew his diaries would someday become public, which is why he elided his mild cursing ("d--n" and "h--l") and was circumspect in other ways. (There is also the mystery why Nancy Reagan gave her blessing for Douglas Brinkley as editor. In his book on Jimmy Carter's post-presidential career ten years ago, Brinkley recycled every anti-Reagan slur and cliché in the liberal inventory. Once Reagan's reputation began to rise, however, Brinkley jumped on the bandwagon with a book extolling the president's 1984 Pointe du Hoc speech in Normandy.)

The diary does confirm several aspects of Reagan's statecraft that have hitherto remained a matter of inference or second-hand testimony. He wrestled with the problem of liberal Republicans who didn't support his program. Concerning Appropriations Committee chairman Senator Mark Hatfield (OR), he wrote: "With some of our friends we don't need enemies." And Reagan called Connecticut Senator Lowell Weicker "a pompous, no good, fathead." But he also expressed frustration with conservatives who were nervous about the deficit or too eager

to give in to tax increases. More than once he wrote of his disappointment with congressional Republicans: "We had rabbits when we needed tigers." He frequently noted attempts by his senior staff to maneuver him into supporting tax increases, which he usually rebuffed until the last minute when he got a budget deal he could accept. Showing the canny negotiating skills he acquired as a union leader in Hollywood, Reagan noted his advice to Hill Republicans not to open budget talks with their bottom line on spending targets, because Democrats would take that position merely as a starting point; always ask for much more than you are willing to settle for. One of the more significant stories the diary confirms is his persistent battle with Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker over the money supply. Reagan and his economic team wanted higher monetary growth to ease the transformation of the economy following his income tax cuts. Volcker, fearing the return of inflation, resisted. There are repeated entries throughout 1983 and 1984 when Reagan meets with, calls, or has his team lean on Volcker not to kill the recovery with tight money.

Reagan hated Mondays, and usually felt better when Congress was out of session: "It's wonderful with Congress away" (August 28, 1984). He held the news media in near total contempt. Of the TV networks (and their anchormen), Reagan wrote in 1984: "I cannot conjure up 1 iota of respect for just about all of them."

The most illuminating entries concern his Cold War statecraft. Over the years it became fashionable to claim that Reagan had made the transition from Cold War hawk to détente dove in the middle of his presidency, culminating in the summits and arms agreements of his second term. The diary shows that from the very beginning Reagan sought a diplomatic breakthrough, and sensed that it was possible only through a deliberate mixture of toughness and outreach. The diary as a whole provides the first opportunity to see Reagan calibrate his approach to the Soviets in real time. Though at times he appeared impatient to make progress, the entries testify above all to his steady consistency, in terms that recall Churchill's famous description in his essay "Consistency in Politics"—"lean[ing] all his weight now on one side and now on the other.... The only way a man can remain consistent amid changing circumstances is to change with them while preserving the same dominating purpose." In one revealing entry from early 1982, West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who had just met with Leonid Brezhnev, tells Reagan that Brezhnev truly fears war. "Maybe our disarmament talks might work after all," the president wrote, tacitly embracing the idea that Soviet fear of the U.S. was a good thing. (There are also

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At bookstores everywhere or call 800-786-3839

several entries in which Reagan relishes Fidel Castro's reported anxiety that the U.S. might move against him, though these rumors were probably disinformation.) But elsewhere Reagan noted that he knew arms talks wouldn't get anywhere until NATO deployed the Pershing and cruise missiles in late 1983.

The frequent clashes between the National Security Council and the State Department represented Reagan's two sides perfectly—and he liked it that way. Just weeks after the famous “evil empire” speech, he wrote: “Some of the N.S.C. staff are too hard line & don't think any approach should be made to the Soviets. I think I'm hard line & will never appease but I do want to try & let them see there is a better world if they'll show by deed they want to get along with the free world.” In 1985, midway between the evil empire speech and the “tear down this wall” speech in Berlin, Reagan recorded that the NSC wanted an upcoming U.N. speech “more harsh toward the Soviets than I think it should be. I won.” But on the other hand, we know that both State and the NSC wanted to water down the president's Berlin Wall speech in 1987 and remove the famous “tear down this wall” line. Reagan won that battle, too.

Grand Strategy

TWO FURTHER ADDITIONS TO THE literature of Reagan's Cold War statesmanship come from Paul Kengor, a Grove City College political science professor, whose painstaking research in both Soviet documents and the Reagan Library is unequalled. *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* picks up and extends the story Peter Schweizer outlined in *Reagan's War* (2002; see “Reagan's Triumph,” CRB, Winter 2002). Liberals deride Kengor, Schweizer, and other pro-Reagan writers as composing the “Reagan Victory School,” which, the critics argue, overstates the deliberateness of Reagan's strategy and its role in unraveling the Soviet Union. Sometimes this criticism arises out of genuine care to make sense of the cacophony of historical voices, sources, and crosscurrents. More often it is the backhanded way liberals diminish Reagan and change the subject from their own embarrassment at having been proved wrong about the Cold War.

Here and there in *Crusader* Kengor appears vulnerable to the criticism that his admiration for Reagan causes him to overreach. But in a fashion much more scrupulous than Reagan's many critics, the author includes in each case the contrary evidence and testimony of contemporaries so that the reader can form his own balanced judgment. In one startling instance, Kengor thinks it possible Reagan contemplated mil-

itary action against the Soviet Union following the imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981. Reagan was by all accounts furious at the course of events in Poland and wanted to do something serious in response. But Kengor immediately adduces the evidence against the idea of Reagan contemplating force, noting as a decisive fact his extreme caution throughout his presidency in using military force.

Kengor shows similar fealty to the evidence on both sides of the question when he considers how deliberate was Reagan's strategy to bring down the Soviet Union. In the years since he left office, much has been made of Reagan's remark to Richard Allen in the late 1970s that his theory of the Cold War was that “we win—they lose.” Reagan's clear break with his predecessors' approach made it plausible to attribute to him a grand strategy designed to bring down the Soviet Union. Kengor is inclined to agree with this view—hence the title *Crusader*—but he is careful to present the testimony of key Reagan aides who say it was not quite so simple and direct.

Several aspects of the story seem unassailable. Based on his view that Soviet Communism was against human nature and therefore doomed to fail in the fullness of time, Reagan decided that he could press hard against the other side's weaknesses. A string of National Security Decision Directives (especially NSDD 75) outlined his intent to roll back the Soviet empire and even change the Soviet Union itself. A few insiders—Kengor's book mentions economists Henry Rowen, Norman Bailey, and the CIA's Herbert Meyer—perceived the Soviet's vulnerability and voiced the outlandish opinion that the West was positioned to win the Cold War, perhaps relatively soon. But few on the Reagan foreign policy team were conscious of an intent to bring down the Soviet Union in the near term; certainly, such a goal was not openly discussed around the White House. Reagan himself seemed surprised when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. It seems reasonable to suppose that he thought himself to be following the example of Lincoln's policy regarding slavery—taking firm but moderate steps to place the evil, in this case Communism, in the course of ultimate, though probably not immediate, extinction.

Along the way Kengor casts new light on the role of Senator Ted Kennedy. At the time of the Gipper's death in 2004, Kennedy was surprisingly full-throated in his praise of Reagan as the leader who won the Cold War; and some of the recent books from liberal writers (especially Reeves) dwell on some of Kennedy's back-channel contacts with the Kremlin that the White House had found helpful. Kengor's examination suggests that this could be a cover-up of more sinister acts. *Crusader* directs our attention to a

KGB document first unearthed by the *London Times* in the 1990s that suggests Kennedy had sought a meeting with Yuri Andropov in 1983 to discuss how to “counter the militaristic policies of Reagan.” In one approach Kennedy proposed organizing interviews with Andropov for broadcast on American television. Once again, Kengor is careful to stipulate the memo's possible inaccuracy and to offer other charitable interpretations of the senator's actions and intent. Regardless of the construction put on the Kennedy mission, Kengor is right to argue that “it constitutes a remarkable example of the lengths to which some on the political left, including a sitting U.S. senator, were willing to go to stop Ronald Reagan.”

Another of the book's themes that will give liberals heartburn is its argument that Reagan deserves credit for the rise of Gorbachev. Liberals like to give Gorbachev as much honor as possible for the end of the Cold War; he was *Time* magazine's Man of the Decade for the 1980s. Gorbachev deserves his due, though a full accounting of his reformist impulses would place him closer to Inspector Clouseau than Machiavelli. During the middle of the 1980s a frequent complaint was that Reagan's confrontational attitude would strengthen the Kremlin “hardliners” and make it impossible for a reformer such as Gorbachev to emerge. On this point Kengor offers compelling evidence that the White House perceived that their confrontational stance would, to the contrary, likely prompt the Soviets' change. In January 1984 Reagan's recently departed national security advisor, William Clark, wrote him to say that he thought administration policy would “very likely influence the rise of a less dangerous Soviet leader than the dying Andropov.”

Reagan's Confidante

KENGOR'S MOST SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION to the Reagan literature is his new biography of Clark, *The Judge, William P. Clark: Ronald Reagan's Top Hand*, co-authored with Clark's cousin, Patricia Clark Doerner. Known as “The Judge” from his tenure on the California Supreme Court (to which Reagan had appointed him), Clark is the only senior member of the president's inner circle who never wrote a memoir of his time with Reagan. A complete treatment of the judge is long overdue; he was the most important and influential presidential confidante since Harry Hopkins.

Clark was a true Cincinnatus, entering public service reluctantly and without personal ambition, and longing always to return to the plough. As they did Reagan, the media and his opponents consistently underestimated and ridiculed him, though he was supremely able.

In some respects Clark could be considered Ronald Reagan without the Hollywood personality, and indeed the judge stands out as the one person with whom the president was personally close—the exception to Reagan's well-known personal distance. (Clark is the person who originated the famous slogan, "let Reagan be Reagan.")

With access to Clark's private papers and other previously restricted sources, Kengor and Doerner detail for the first time many of Clark's exploits, especially his crucial role as national security advisor in 1982 and 1983, when Reagan's Soviet strategy took definite shape. His role in the president's March 1983 speech announcing the Strategic Defense Initiative was decisive. Virtually everyone in the upper reaches of the administration was against the speech, except for Clark. It is hard to imagine Reagan going through with it without the judge's backup. Clark was the best of Reagan's six national security advisors—the authors argue he was one of the best for any president ever—and when he stepped down it was mostly because he thought the tensions between him and the State Department were hurting his boss. Few public servants are so self-effacing.

Clark was Reagan's go-to person for discrete missions to foreign leaders, which continued even after he formally left the administration in 1985. Kengor and Doerner provide inside accounts of Clark's private meetings with François Mitterrand, Pope John Paul II, Margaret Thatcher, the leaders of China, and Saddam Hussein. There is also the first complete account of his successful 1983 mission to South America to prevent Suriname from becoming another Nicaragua. And *The Judge* provides a useful account of Clark's extensive efforts to blunt the nuclear freeze movement and the pacifism of the Catholic bishops. *The Crusader* and *The Judge* deserve to take their place among essential studies of Reagan. With these works, the literature on Reagan's foreign policy is more or less complete—until additional classified documents are released or new Soviet sources are revealed.

Domestic Transformation

BY CONTRAST, THE STORY OF REAGAN'S domestic policy remains clouded and obscure, in part because we are still wrestling with many of the same issues today—tax cuts, trade and budget deficits, globalization, affirmative action, and the rest of the culture war. The domestic story is harder to tell because it is less amenable to the direct personal and moral dimensions of the Cold War and because of the wider range of complicated issues. Robert M. Collins's *Transforming America* is a masterly

synoptic account of the Reagan years (including two chapters on the Cold War that track closely with the other books under review here) that is especially good on domestic issues. Its coverage of the Reagan Revolution's domestic side is the best since John Ehrman's *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* (2005) and Richard B. McKenzie's *What Went Right in the 1980s* (1993).

A professor at the University of Missouri, Columbia, Collins is the rare historian who is literate in economics and public policy. He combines this knowledge with a writing style that is direct and understated. Indeed, it is hard to tell from his scrupulous prose what his own ideological leanings may be. Although he does not shrink from criticizing Reagan or his record, Collins confidently dispatches many of the well-entrenched criticisms of the Gipper that most historians roll over for, and in a way that does not read like a pro-Reagan brief. While he doesn't delve deeply into the president's character, he easily concludes that "Reagan was not stupid, lazy, or passive to the point of disengagement." "[O]n the large matters where it counted most..." says Collins, "Reagan was firmly in charge."

The author thinks that both the claims in favor of and against supply-side economics were "overwrought," but understands that supply-side's decisive effect was making the Republican Party the party of growth. He dismisses the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's view that Reagan's huge budget deficits were deliberate, while acknowledging that the deficit did have a "shattering impact on the sort of federal activism strongly identified with Democratic liberalism.... After all, deficits served a useful purpose: They keep liberals from voting on big new spending programs."

Collins is even better on some of the issues that remain hot buttons today, such as income inequality, globalization, corporate restructuring and changes in corporate finance, and the savings and loan crisis (which is enjoying something of a reprise lately in the form of the collapse of sub-prime lending). "[A] fair-minded autopsy finds that the S&L collapse of the 1980s defies both easy analysis and glib moralizing," he writes. The Reagan Administration did not cause the problem, though he thinks the administration could have monitored it better. While many commentators have fixated upon the Wall Street scandals of the 1980s (many of which were prosecuted by then-U.S. attorney Rudy Giuliani), Collins notes that "it is a fundamental error to mistake a part of the story—the reality of scandal and misfeasance—for the larger whole." He sides with economic historians who conclude that the '80s resulted in "the most formidable transformation" in the history of U.S. business, and set the stage for the high-

tech developments and prosperity of the 1990s that continue today.

Similarly, Collins has closely reasoned views of income inequality ("There are, however, serious problems with the chiefly political explanation for America's rising inequality"), the unfolding of the AIDS epidemic, and homelessness, for which media coverage was so negligent that it could be considered "reportage from another planet." His surveys of the rise of post-modernism and other aspects of the culture wars are balanced and thorough, though his judgments lack some of the sure-footedness of his chapters on economics and policy, partly for the understandable reason that these "matters of the heart" are less susceptible to quantitative analysis.

Perhaps the most suggestive aspect of *Transforming America* is the way in which Collins connects the Reagan years with our current political scene. Bill Clinton, he thinks, was the perfect reflection of the two sides of the 1980s—more conservative on economic and social policy (especially welfare reform), and more liberal on the cultural front. The author recalls with great effectiveness Clinton's manipulation of the therapeutic victim culture that took shape in the '80s, which development showed the limitations of Reagan's transformative effect on public life.

Indeed, the combination of a rightward political shift and a leftward cultural tilt helps mightily to explain the increasingly shrill tenor and brittle nature of American public life at the dawn of the new century.... [I]n the aftermath of the Long Eighties the right felt frustrated by the fact that it had triumphed politically but continued to lose ground in the cultural struggles of the day, while the left was similarly disappointed at its inability to translate its cultural influence into political victory."

Though this is correct as far as it goes, it leads to deeper questions about the reciprocal influence of politics and culture that lie beyond the scope of Collins's sober book. For all of his victories (and defeats), the transformation of America under Ronald Reagan was inconclusive, incomplete. The arguments about Reagan persist, because they are proxies for the political arguments of today.

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LAND OF THE FREE

America: The Last Best Hope, Volume I: From the Age of Discovery to a World at War,
by William J. Bennett. Nelson Current, 592 pages, \$29.99

America: The Last Best Hope, Volume II: From a World at War to the Triumph of Freedom,
by William J. Bennett. Nelson Current, 608 pages, \$29.99



HOW MUCH AMERICAN HISTORY DO young Americans learn today? Or—better question—what American history, if any, do they learn? The answer to the first question seems to be very little. The answer to the second question is too much of the wrong kind. They learn that America had slavery and treated women unequally and that colonists and settlers behaved in beastly ways toward “Native Americans.” They learn that military units were racially segregated in World War II and Japanese Americans interned. They end up not knowing whether the Civil War came before or after the American Revolution or who attacked Pearl Harbor. Yet American adults seem to hunger for another kind of history. They snap up copies of excellent recent books on the Founding Fathers and the Civil War. They want to know how this country came to be what it is: a nation that has advanced ordered freedom, representative government, and bounteous global capitalism. They want to read the kind of history Bill Bennett has written in his two-volume *America: The Last Best Hope*.

A former secretary of education under Ronald Reagan, now the Claremont Institute's Washington Fellow and host of his own radio show, Bennett assures us early on that his ac-

count shows our country “warts and all,” but decidedly not an America that is “nothing but warts.” “It is the story,” he writes, “of a great people who wisely choose how to save themselves and others, how to correct wrongs, and how to preserve what is still the greatest nation in the history of the world.”

A narrative history cannot, even in some thousand pages, cover everything, nor can it be based on close examination of more than a few primary sources. Bennett has relied on secondary sources, and in my view has chosen them well (including my *Our Country: The Shaping of America from Roosevelt to Reagan*, 1990). He has a gift for choosing the pithy, revealing anecdote and for providing fresh character sketches and critical analyses of the leading figures. This is an American history that adults will find refreshing and enlightening and that younger readers will find a darn good read.

He starts off with Christopher Columbus, but soon shifts from the conquistadors to the English settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts Bay. His is an Anglocentric America, where settlers brought English traditions of law and liberty and spread them, with modifications, across the continent. They also brought slaves, as Bennett notes. One way this book differs

from the histories that I read growing up in the 1950s is that black Americans are woven into the story throughout—as slaves in the colonies and the young republic, as opponents of slavery before and during the Civil War, and as advocates of desegregation in the 20th century. Due notice is given the extraordinary Frederick Douglass, and due praise is given Thomas Jefferson for his demand for a speedy end to the slave trade, and to Ulysses S. Grant for his (unhappily) unsuccessful attempt to preserve black citizens' rights in the Reconstruction-era South. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the civil rights movement are rightly celebrated in *America's* account of the 1950s and 1960s. In contrast, Bennett's treatment of American Indians will irritate some. He does not indulge the fantasy that they lived in respectful harmony with nature, and takes pains to show why American frontiersmen (and -women) saw them as something like terrorists.

BENNETT'S AMERICA IS, MOST OF ALL, THE product of great men. George Washington takes center stage when in 1753, at age 21, he negotiates with the French in what is now western Pennsylvania. With relish the author tells us how Washington crossed the

Delaware in 1776 and saved the revolutionary cause from disaster, how he laid down his command voluntarily after the war, and came out of private life to preside at the Constitutional Convention. Bennett reports that when one delegate moved that the U.S. standing army be limited to 5,000 men, Washington, in one of his few interventions at the convention, replied the proposal had merit "provided that we could also require that no enemy would ever invade with more than five thousand troops."

One of the forces pushing the founders toward a closer federal union (and also later toward division), notes Bennett, was the question of what to do with the territories. In 1787, when slavery seemed to be on the way to abolition in most of the states, the Northwest Ordinance established that the territory north of the Ohio River would not have slavery. In 1854, when Southerners hoped that slavery would expand beyond its present bounds, the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened any territory to slavery if its settlers were so inclined. One lesson to be learned here is that 18th- and 19th-century American statesmen believed that their nation was still in the process of formation. Even when the new 13 states contained just 3.9 million people, mostly not far from the Atlantic, George Washington envisioned the United States as a continental country (it already boasted a Continental Army!) with 100 million people, inferior to none in the world.

MY GENERATION TENDS TO IDENTIFY the 1930s as America's most dangerous decade. For Bennett it was the 1850s. The nation had just been expanded, under the dour but determined James K. Polk, to Texas, California, and the Pacific Northwest. And, as Bennett points out, American settlers had led the way before U.S. military troops arrived. Immigrants were also moving into America in a tide that, as a proportion of preexisting population (12%), has never been exceeded. And Southerners were determined to advance slavery in the territories and to acquire slave territory in Central America and the Caribbean.

Into this picture stepped Abraham Lincoln who, CRB readers will not be disappointed to learn, is the central and most fully realized figure in a book whose subtitle comes from one of his great speeches. Lincoln dominates nearly

a hundred pages of this text, and it is he more than anyone else who fulfills the purposes of the founders and enables America to live up to Washington's vision. We see his furious reaction to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, his debates with Stephen Douglas, his struggle to save the Union, and his Second Inaugural, perhaps the greatest speech in American history.

No other individual comes across as Lincoln's equal. Theodore Roosevelt's vigor is nicely evoked. Woodrow Wilson's stubbornness in blocking reasonable reservations to the Versailles Treaty is sternly recorded. Bennett does not have much to say for the Republican presidents of the 1920s, and treats the decade, as so many historians have, as a time of flappers and Fordism, Charles Lindbergh and H.L. Menck-en. There is much more, some of it admiring, some of it critical, on Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal with its extraordinary cast of characters. Here I would note my chief criticism of the book, that it underplays the economic achievements of the United States, the sources of its prosperity, and its economic preeminence in the world. Bennett does give some credit to the 19th-century entrepreneurs, too long unjustly dismissed as robber barons, but like so many New Deal historians he seems to regard the prosperity of the 1920s as an unsustainable bubble, and does not explain that FDR (like Herbert Hoover before him) misdiagnosed the downward deflationary spiral of the early 1930s and prescribed mostly the wrong medicine. He is much better on Roosevelt as war leader and on his extraordinary partnership with Winston Churchill.

The American histories I read in the 1950s all stopped at 1945. There was perhaps a danger of stirring controversy about the beginnings of the Cold War and the accompanying anti-Communist movements. Bennett covers post-1945 with a crisp narrative that takes fair account of the period (he notes, for example, that there were indeed Communists in high government places during World War II) and scrupulously avoids partisan cheap shots. Harry Truman is honored for resolutely taking on the Soviet Union in the Cold War and Dwight Eisenhower is given credit for enforcing the court order desegregating Little Rock's Central High School. The author explains that John Kennedy's dispatch of U.S. troops to South

Vietnam and approval of the coup against the Diem government presented his successor Lyndon Johnson with unpalatable alternatives, and he argues that Richard Nixon's paranoia led him to sanction the abuses that have been gathered under the rubric of Watergate. Gerald Ford's and Jimmy Carter's administrations come across as unhappy times, and Bennett hails Ronald Reagan's election in 1980 as the beginning of a national revival. He ends the book with the picture of Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Mikhail Gorbachev at Governors Island in New York Harbor in December 1988, the same tableau with which I ended *Our Country*. In that picture, of course, we have inklings of momentous events to come, not all of which had occurred when my book appeared: the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001.

NARRATIVES TELL A STORY AND HELP us understand what was centrally important. For many years the dominant narratives of American history were written by the New Deal historians, who depicted Franklin Roosevelt as the equal of Lincoln, the culmination of progressive thinking from Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt to the social workers and union leaders of the 1920s and '30s. These histories gave way to those by the New Leftists, who depicted our history as one outrage after another committed by privileged white males against women and people of color. Bennett presents an older story brought up to date. Twentieth-century leaders are given their due—Roosevelt and Reagan more than the rest—for taking the nation from difficult times into important triumphs. But the central figures in this narrative are George Washington, preeminent among the founders, and Abraham Lincoln, sublime in his seeming simplicity, who elevated and held together the Union, the last best hope of mankind. I think Bill Bennett's got it right.

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A THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS

Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present,
by Michael B. Oren. W.W. Norton & Co., 608 pages, \$35



WHEN PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH announced that the United States would try to “democratize” the Middle East, some Americans shuddered and the rest were astonished. Experts accused Bush of a radical departure from traditional U.S. foreign policy. Ordinary Americans, for their part, wondered about Islam’s violent fanatics and feared that the region was entirely alien to our own experience. In *Power, Faith, and Fantasy*, Michael B. Oren, a senior fellow at the Shalem Center in Jerusalem and author of the impressive *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (2002), examines Bush’s policy in the light of history and discovers that its audacity is far from unprecedented. By and large, Bush’s aspirations fall into the pattern of American involvement in the Middle East. In fact, the American encounter with the Middle East dates from the beginning of the republic; Oren writes to enlighten us about our own history.

Condemned as I am professionally to read the gusher of rant and rave about the contemporary Middle East, I found the book’s bulk and subject initially dismaying. But Oren focuses on the pre-1953 period and devotes only 100 pages to the rest; he wisely decided to cover the much forgotten rather than the much debated. What’s more, he does history the old-fashioned way, with 129 pages of

footnotes and bibliography, and with maps, a chronology, and a fine selection of portraits and photographs that make up nearly one-fifth of the text. The narrative is ornamented by shrewd biographical sketches of Americans obscure and famous. And what Americans we find here! Merchants, missionaries, soldiers, statesmen, gamblers, fools—all exemplifying that typically American character, by turns lovable and infuriating, which the historian Walter McDougall calls the “hustler”: he (and she) of the inexhaustible urge to do big things quickly, and sometimes not so legally. The Middle East, originally called the Near East or the Orient—lucrative, mysterious, and sacred—was, and is, the natural playground for such talents.

The book is an adroit combination of narrative and biography. Its argument is that three themes, power, faith, and fantasy, have defined the American encounter with the Middle East. By power Oren means the usual exertions of military and economic influence; faith, the lure of the region, especially Palestine, to a deeply Protestant republic; and fantasy, illusions about the Middle East that inspired many a dogooder, carnival barker, Hollywood mogul, and president. Some may be skeptical of this trinity. But they have the daunting task of finding another explanation for America’s involvement in the region. The U.S. consistently has provided

the Middle East advanced technology, advocated democracy or offered to mediate peace, and supported a Jewish State in Zion as both desirable and practical.

OREN POSITS THAT THE MIDDLE EAST has had a much greater influence on American identity and fortunes than is usually believed. It was the U.S. Navy’s 1815 victory over the pirates that won the country international respect and safeguarded its early trade. The American Board of Missions installed the modern educational institutions of the Turks and Arabs (e.g., the American College of Beirut), a by-product of an otherwise failed effort to convert Muslims and Jews (and other Christians) to varieties of Protestantism. After the Civil War, officers both Union and Confederate trained the Egyptian military. American engineers built a modern shipyard and armory for the Ottomans. And in the late 19th century the Middle East became a prime attraction for wealthy (and not so wealthy) American tourists.

The decade after the Civil War marked a high time for distinguished U.S. visitors, including General William Tecumseh Sherman (1872), the young Theodore Roosevelt (1872), and former president Ulysses S. Grant (1878). They were lavishly feted by local potentates who saw the U.S. as a balancing power against the increasingly rapacious Europeans. Mark

Twain visited in 1867 and his best-selling travel account in *The Innocents Abroad* deflated American illusions about the region and, mordantly, about themselves.

Americans read Twain and guffawed at their own foibles, but he did not diminish their conviction that U.S. missionary efforts would transform the people there and the world with them. This innocence still persists. Forty summers ago, studying Arabic at Princeton, I encountered a young Baptist couple from Tennessee. They had come to learn the language in order to convert the Muslims. When I questioned their chances of success—given the record—they informed me that even without knowing Arabic they had already in a single afternoon turned a dozen Muslims in the Old City of Jerusalem toward the Truth. When I ventured that this conversion had occurred among merchants in the Souk, they exclaimed, “How did you know?”

OREN SKILLFULLY TRACES THE PERSISTENT American enthusiasm for restoring Jewish control over Palestine, an impulse that predated Theodor Herzl and indeed Zionism among American Jews. Abraham Lincoln, for example, said, “Restoring the Jews to their national home in Palestine...is a noble dream and one shared by many Americans.” Countless clergymen and their congregations believed that the Jewish Return would trigger the return of Jesus and the Jews’ conversion. Although the mainline Protestant denominations would drop restorationism (which often co-existed with rank anti-Semitism) and become fierce opponents of Zionism—lest it jeopardize their educational mission to the Muslims—the Zionist theme resonated with most presidents right up through Ronald Reagan. Oren even uncovers the astonishing fact that a 19th-century forebear of the Bush family, also named George Bush, wrote a once famous Zionist tract. Thus quite contrary to Jimmy Carter’s vengeful campaign or academic fulminations against the “Israel Lobby,” a very large non-Jewish Zionist lobby existed well before Herzl and was, you might say, as American as apple pie.

By 1914 a distinctive American approach to the Middle East had emerged. Those concerned with American power in the region were well represented by the visiting generals, presidents, and Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, the geopolitical theorist who coined the term “Middle East.” These men saw Islam as backward and argued over the role of European empires, but were sure that American military power, occasionally but amply exercised, was needed to safeguard U.S. interests. American traders, including arms salesmen,

gravitated to this group. Americans drawn to the region by faith included the missionary-educators and the restorationists. These two groups would split over the Zionist enterprise, the former lobbying against the latter in the name of “modernizing” the Arabs through Western education. Most in both groups were anti-European and favored local nationalists. Finally, some Americans, drawn mostly from the realms of politics, literature, and entertainment, were entranced by a vision of a Middle East as an exotic, mysterious realm of the imagination that offered thrills and amusement. This group, however, tells us more about ourselves than about anything in the region.

Power, faith, and illusion do not travel well together. Oren spends much of the post-1914 period exposing the often inept compromises made by American leaders who themselves reflected the three impulses. Woodrow Wilson stayed neutral toward the Turks in World War I and couldn’t save the Armenians, but he did help the Jews. America provided a haven for, among others, David Ben-Gurion, who would become Israel’s first prime minister. Franklin Roosevelt was reluctant to intervene to save Jews during the Holocaust. Yet in his 1945 meeting on a battleship in the Suez Canal with Ibn Saud, Roosevelt apparently urged Saudi Arabia’s founding monarch to support Zionism.

Oren compiles a catalogue of American presidents trying to have it both ways, from Truman’s dogged search for compromise between nascent Israel and the Arabs in 1947-48, to Eisenhower’s angry but self-defeating anti-imperialism in 1956 when he opposed Britain and France in the Suez Canal crisis; and from JFK’s unrewarded indulgence of Nasser to LBJ’s fantasy international regatta intended to prevent the Six-Day War. Jimmy Carter achieved the 1979 Camp David accords, and Reagan achieved (in Oren’s view) only confusion, e.g., in his disastrous intervention in Lebanon in 1983-84, and, of course, the Iran-Contra affair. George H.W. Bush managed crises better than he did their aftermath, and Bill Clinton was a bystander, timid about al-Qaeda, and a failure at Camp David in 2000. (Oren oddly omits this item.) Which leaves George W. Bush, who appears a kind of composite of all the foregoing, a faithful Wilsonian ready to transform the Middle East and a Zionist even without the Jewish vote, yet prepared to use overwhelming force even if his geopolitics turn out to be faith-based. Oren gives the attempted Pax Americana by American presidents the ironic title “The Thirty Years’ War.”

IN A WORK OF THIS SIZE AND SCOPE, THERE will be slips. Oren exaggerates by casting the Barbary episode as a confidence-booster that helped pave the way for the Monroe Doctrine. His hand becomes less sure on recent events. The U.S. had neither an alliance nor a proto-alliance with Saddam during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s. The policy instead was to weaken Iran and Iraq. Saddam fought the war with Arab money and Soviet and French weapons. The U.S. remained marginal until perhaps the end, when Khomeini used the U.S. reflagging of Kuwaiti oil tankers as a reason to agree to a cease-fire, fearing that the U.S. intended to join the war on Saddam’s side. Oren would also have done well to classify under his rubric of fantasy the U.S. diplomat Philip Habib (he believed more in Lebanon than the Lebanese did) and the late Caspar Weinberger (no pragmatist, he believed the Saudis could take care of American interests in the Middle East). Finally, Oren understands political scientist Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) primarily in connection with the debate over Middle East policy, when in fact its chief aim was to counter Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), another American fantasy. But these and other imperfections do not vitiate Oren’s achievement in the book nor the rightness of his thesis. Everything the U.S. is doing today in the Middle East has a precedent—including the attempt to change a government by force, which occurred during the abortive Eaton expedition against Yusuf Qaramanli, the ruler of Tripoli, in spring 1803. But that precedent is not a harbinger of success.

Conscious perhaps that Americans like happy endings, Oren’s book tries to supply one. He concludes that “by protecting themselves from Middle East threats while simultaneously trying to assist native peoples,” today’s Americans are acting comfortably within the nation’s traditions. He argues that, on balance, the U.S. has “caused significantly less harm than good.” And then, a final flourish: “By responsibly wielding its strength and consistently upholding its principles, the United States might yet transform its vision of peaceful, fruitful relations with the Middle East from fantasy into reality.” Erring on the side of fantasy, this sentence sounds like one of those Hollywood voice-overs that follow a tragic finale, assuring the audience that all will turn out right. Oren thus ends on a very American note.

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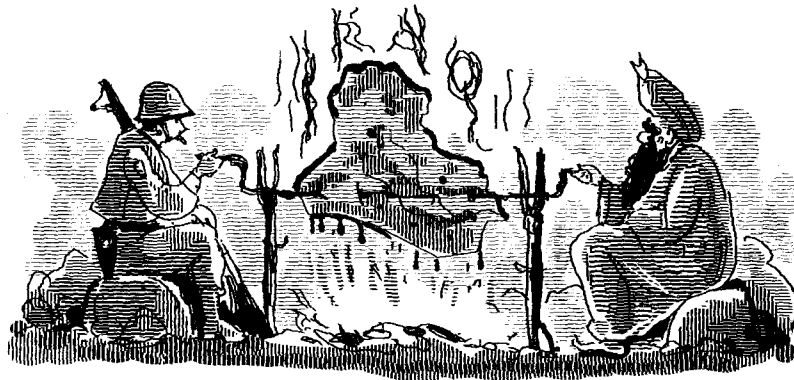
Book Review by Charles R. Kesler

NO EUPHORIA YET

Making War to Keep Peace, by Jeane J. Kirkpatrick.
HarperCollins, 384 pages, \$26.95

World War IV: The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism,
by Norman Podhoretz. Doubleday, 230 pages, \$24.95

Mugged by Reality: The Liberation of Iraq and the Failure of Good Intentions,
by John Agresto. Encounter Books, 202 pages, \$25.95



WHAT GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS reported is not exactly news: Iraq is a mess, though a slightly improved one. The “surge” is working, in the real but limited sense that it is buying some time for Iraqis to reconcile—and for Americans to reconcile themselves to the near certainty that the Iraqis will not. Then we can blame *them* for the mess, begin to draw down our forces in good conscience, and decide how long and in what capacity to stick around the area.

But will we have learned anything? The Iraq War has been a blow to the entire U.S. foreign policy establishment. The neoconservatives have taken it on the chin, but the truth is that realists, liberal internationalists, and the devotees of diplomacy, development, and democracy have all been confounded by it.

The neocons’ current prominence in the foreign policy debate owes as much to the simplifications of liberal (and, to be sure, intra-conservative) demonology as to their actual influence on the Bush Administration. Nevertheless, they proudly took the lead in advocating the Iraq war writ large—as the catalyst of a democratic transformation in the whole Middle East. This strain showed up very early. Only a month after 9/11, Max Boot, writing in the *Weekly Standard*, was already suggesting, “To turn Iraq into a beacon of hope for the oppressed peoples of the Middle East: Now that would be a historic war aim.”

Yet all along a few neocons have opposed the grander vision of the war, and a few others have since broken ranks over it. Three new books pro-

vide insight into the quiet neoconservative debate over Iraq. The late Jeane J. Kirkpatrick takes an old-school, skeptical stand against the war. Norman Podhoretz, as old-school as they come but on this question solidly with the war’s neocon defenders, flashes his polemical genius on behalf of the Bush Doctrine. John Agresto went to Iraq to help build democracy but came back talking about the law of unintended consequences. A second-generation neocon who has rediscovered the central cautionary theme of the first generation, he may be a harbinger of things to come.

IT WAS NOT WIDELY KNOWN THAT JEANE Kirkpatrick had opposed President George W. Bush’s decision to invade Iraq. She kept her reservations to herself, and even accepted the administration’s offer to defend the war’s legality before the United Nations Human Rights Commission, meeting in Geneva in 2003. But she confined her case to the invasion’s legality, not its wisdom or necessity, because she believed it neither wise nor necessary. Even in arguing for its legality, she rejected the administration’s claim of a right to wage preemptive war. Instead, she defended the military action on the narrow grounds that it was a continuation of the 1991 Gulf War. United Nations Resolution 687, which formally dictated the terms of that war’s ceasefire, had been violated flagitiously by Saddam. The 2003 intervention, legally speaking, was in her view merely an enforcement action under the terms of that Resolution (and a more recent one, 1441, demanding

that Iraq cooperate with the weapons inspectors), not a new war.

This former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (1981–85, under Ronald Reagan) and longtime professor of government at Georgetown University did not like to criticize sitting presidents. (She made an exception for Jimmy Carter, God bless her.) With her death in December 2006, the country appeared to have lost any chance of her counsel on the war. But her posthumous book addresses Afghanistan and Iraq in its final chapter, and in fact Iraq haunts the whole volume.

Making War to Keep Peace has a certain hurried quality to it, and the main argument is never cogently stated. Yet Kirkpatrick’s extraordinary ability to stitch together ideas and events is clear throughout, as are her keen intelligence and love of country. The book is basically a study of America’s post-Cold War foreign policy, centering on the decisions for military intervention abroad made by the George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations. She has more respect for the former than the latter, but she has criticisms of each.

The book is also a study of new world orders. With the Cold War’s end, America faced “for the third time in a century,” she writes, “the need and the opportunity to try to control violence, aggression, and war” in order to “create peace in Europe and the world.” For the third time in a century, the U.S. chose to do so by promulgating “a new world order” based on international organizations, laws, and peacekeepers. Wilson had

sought such a world after World War I, Franklin Roosevelt after World War II. After the Cold War, it was George H. W. Bush's turn.

When Iraq invaded Kuwait in late 1990, Bush decided to assemble a vast international coalition to expel Saddam's forces. It took months to marshal the alliance because Bush insisted on getting the U.N. Security Council's blessing for every step. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher warned him against this. For Bush, however, international consensus was a condition and a sign of the new world order. He wanted to reinvigorate the U.N. and the principle of collective security, although he was prudent enough to keep the actual direction of the war in American hands.

When it came time to finish the tyrant, however, Bush again deferred to the international consensus, proving that his foreign-policy realism had an idealism of its own. In truth, the decision to let Saddam and his elite forces escape seemed hard for Bush himself to accept. "Still, no feeling of euphoria...", he wrote in his diary the day after hostilities ceased. But he steeled himself. "Going in and occupying Iraq," he explained later in his memoir, "thus unilaterally exceeding the United Nations mandate, would have destroyed the precedent of international response to aggression that we hoped to establish."

The Clinton Administration took this idealism to greater lengths, investing heavily in a foreign policy of "assertive multilateralism." The doctrine worked, sort of, in the Balkans, but the administration's nation-building projects foundered in Somalia, Haiti, and almost everywhere else.

Kirkpatrick argues that America's efforts to establish a new world order in the 20th century failed. They neglected the sovereign rights of nations, permitted the U.N. to get big ideas, and, to varying degrees, wasted the military in illusory peacekeeping and nation-building, instead of leaving those projects to long-term cultural, market, political, and religious forces.

Sound familiar? It is hard to know whether she is describing the current Bush Administration's predicament in Iraq or the Clinton Administration's in Haiti: "the country lacked virtually all the requirements for a democratic government: rule of law, an elite with a shared commitment to democratic procedures, an educated populace, a sense of citizenship, a decent standard of living, and habits of trust and cooperation." In fact, this is her description of Haiti. But her account of Iraq is virtually identical, except that she drops "an educated populace" and "a decent standard of living." Iraq had those, which put it one or two steps above Haiti in fitness for democracy. One or two steps, she implies by the parallel, is not enough. She argues, too, that the Reagan Doctrine applied only to

free peoples struggling against oppressors; she wonders if the Iraqis are a people, much less one struggling for its freedom.

Kirkpatrick was a practicing social scientist from the realist school. She studied power, its use and constraint; and she studied political culture, which was more or less everything else that might influence power's deployment. She shied away from the analysis of the ends or the justice of democratic government in favor of the science of its "requirements" and "procedures." She shared this preference with many of the other American social scientists who were prominent first-generation neoconservatives. In her belief in the shaping power of cultural forces, the dangers of abstract principle, and the limitations of social engineering at home and abroad, she was very much in the neoconservative mainstream.

As a distinguished diplomat herself, she pronounces in her book on the "twin goals of our foreign policy": "first, ensuring our security and, second, promoting democracy and human rights. An appropriate balance between the two must exist," she writes, "and that balance must be determined within the unique circumstances of any situation." A balance of realism and idealism, in other words, is the statesman's unchanging goal amid changing situations. But is there not some integral connection between our security and our cause in the world? Why choose to promote democracy and human rights in the first place? Or is this less idealistic than it may seem, because we are the kind of a people that has no choice but to pay homage to these values—the outcomes of our own cultural forces?

These are the kind of questions she did not like to ask, questions that circumscribed her science and her brand of conservatism. Yet her practical good sense (along with her admiration for President Ronald Reagan) suggests that she also knew better than to regard good foreign policy, or for that matter good politics, as simply a series of tradeoffs between the security that we need and the morality that we can spare.

NORMAN PODHORETZ, WHO EDITED *Commentary* for 35 years and is now its editor-at-large, has a very different view of Iraq and, not incidentally, of George W. Bush. He does not have "any doubts about the leadership of George W. Bush," and thinks he will someday be considered a great president, alongside Harry Truman, to whom Podhoretz frequently compares him. Written before Bush announced that the previous strategy in Iraq was not working and switched to the "surge," *World War IV: The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism* betrays no hint that the war is off-course or that democratization is anything but central to the struggle. In fact, it is a better book for it. Podhoretz set out to write the strongest possible

case for the Iraq War on its original grounds—as an application of the Bush Doctrine. For a vigorous, uncompromising defense of the Bush Doctrine, this is the book.

Critics of the war are legion, of course, and it is on them that the author trains his fire. Podhoretz pummels everyone from his old ex-friend Norman Mailer to conservatives who have dared to criticize the administration's competency to those whom he calls the "domestic insurgency"—"journalistic devotees of the Vietnam syndrome," isolationists right and left, liberal internationalists, and realists like Brent Scowcroft. He assails William F. Buckley, George F. Will, Harry V. Jaffa, and the writers of this journal for their alleged defeatism, and Francis Fukuyama, Michael Ledeen, Max Boot, Joshua Muravchik, Kenneth Adelman, and Frank Gaffney for other lapses from war orthodoxy.

Podhoretz is a grand, pugnacious figure in American conservatism, and the contrast between his frenetic refutations and the absolute calm of his prose style is a part of his enduring charm as a writer; the effect can be mesmerizing. And this book does some things very well. It details succinctly and devastatingly how successive American administrations emboldened the terrorists. It contains as lucid an account of the controversies over Saddam's weapons of mass destruction as you will find. It traces the radicalization of the Democrats, providing a handy record of their anti-war and anti-Bush fevers. And it proves, above all, that the Bush Administration's objectives in the war are "marked by more than a touch of nobility."

In some respects, indeed, Podhoretz's arguments are sharper than Kirkpatrick's. He points out that after World War II Germany and Japan were transformed into viable democracies in about a decade, not the ages that she seems to suggest cultural evolution requires. Alluding to what political scientist Samuel Huntington (in his 1991 book of the same title) dubbed *The Third Wave* of democratization that swept the world beginning 30 years ago, Podhoretz asks why Iraq and the whole Middle East could not be the next to be lifted by the rising tide. Kirkpatrick does not even try to explain why so many previously undemocratic countries—e.g., Namibia, Mongolia, Guatemala—turned democratic so quickly. Her favorite Huntington book is *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996).

Nonetheless, Podhoretz's analysis in *World War IV* leaves a lot to be desired. To begin with, there is the matter of the title, that is, the name of the war. One of his few very gentle criticisms of President Bush is that he missed his chance to give this conflict its proper name. He understands why Bush faltered: he feared either misleading or confusing the American public. Misleading it, because Bush did not want to

seem to endorse a war against a billion Muslims around the world, nor a conventional world war involving mass armies and surrender ceremonies; confusing it, because even if he had accepted the nomenclature of world war, he didn't want to leave people wondering what happened to the third one.

In Podhoretz's own view, the Cold War (1947-1989) was World War III, which shows that a world war does not have to involve huge pitched battles between nation-states. But the point is over-broad. War's demarcations are always somewhat inexact because they are political. Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland was in one sense the beginning of World War II, but in another merely its prelude—a point, to be followed by many others, where the gathering conflict might have been but was not headed off, alas.

The Cold War involved bloody proxy clashes between the great powers in places like Korea and Vietnam, and the constant threat of even more serious global conflagration. It stayed "cold" because the biggest, bloodiest battles never broke out, and because the global struggles involving propagandists, diplomats, spies, assassins, and coups d'états did not trigger a general war. If the Soviets had invaded Western Europe through the Fulda Gap and launched preemptive nuclear attacks on the United States and its allies, then the term World War III would instantly have been used to distinguish this hot war from the preceding cold one: "World War III has broken out!" So although calling the Cold War a world war makes sense—it was the global geostrategic conflict succeeding World War II—that limited sense would be stretched to the breaking point by terming the "long struggle against Islamofascism" the fourth world war. The present war involves a handful of regimes in the Middle East, and does not involve serious military confrontation in Europe or Asia or on the high seas—theaters that have been central to all previous world wars.

THEN THERE IS PODHORETZ'S DEFENSE of the Bush Doctrine. There is justice in Bush's desire to see free peoples liberated from tyranny, and prudence in his insistence on the right, under extreme circumstances, to wage war to preempt or even prevent attack. Podhoretz roundly vindicates him on each count. But Podhoretz offers weak arguments and little evidence for what he calls the second pillar of the Bush Doctrine, the presumption that political oppression causes terrorism and Islamofascism. This theory, popularized by Natan Sharansky and embraced by the president, holds that it is essential to democratize the oppressive regimes of the Middle East, which is to say, every regime in the Middle East save Israel, in order to "drain the swamps" in which terrorism breeds. Podho-

retz underlines the need "to push all the states in the greater Middle East—every last one of them—toward democracy."

This is now the defining argument of the contemporary neoconservative movement, distinguishing the neo-neocons from the paleoneos like Kirkpatrick; and it has been adopted all too easily by many garden-variety conservatives eager to follow the president's lead. But the argument fails for several reasons.

In the first place, misgovernment doesn't always give rise to terrorist opposition. The Soviet Union did not breed a terrorist opposition; it bred Natan Sharansky and many other dissidents, along of course with many faithful and hypocritical followers of Marxism-Leninism. Many of the 9/11 terrorists and most of the killers who struck in London and on the continent lived not under Middle Eastern tyranny but enjoying all the comforts and freedoms of Western liberal democracy. Their actions were not protests against tyranny but against that democracy. If they resented the West for supporting their home countries' unsavory regimes, they did so mostly because they despised those regimes as apostate or heretical, i.e., less complete religious tyrannies than they preferred.

When out of disgust with misgovernment terrorists do arise, one would expect them to strike, in the first place, their own hated regime. In vowing no more 9/11s, however, Americans are concerned not with terrorists killing Saudis or Egyptians but with Saudi and Egyptian terrorists killing Americans. They were, and are, enabled to kill Americans because their perverted regimes deflect and co-opt their anger, channeling it against us through various missionary and terrorist networks around the globe kept in business for just such purposes. This fact might indeed be grounds for "draining the swamps," if we knew how to or could do that. But it is also grounds for a much simpler strategy. Give the tyrants a choice: keep your alligators in your own swamp, or we will feed you to them.

Podhoretz rewards those proffering blunt counsel like that—particularly Angelo Codevilla, Mark Helprin, and me in the pages of the CRB—with the designation "Superhawks." Our constant advice, beginning after 9/11, was to smash Saddam's regime but *not* to allow our troops to get bogged down in an elaborate occupation of Iraq. We urged the continued threat of military force to intimidate other bad actors, for example, Syria, Iran, and Janus-faced allies like Saudi Arabia, into ceasing their export of anti-American terrorism, or else. In *Commentary*, Podhoretz confessed sympathy for this policy, and a faint echo of that sympathy remains in his book. But he rejects our advice as unrealistic, citing our "refusal to take account of the character of the American nation."

He seems to mean that Americans won't abide such a tough policy. They believe in Colin Powell's Pottery Barn rule—if you break it, you own it—and having dashed Saddam's regime to pieces, they insist on sticking around to help the Iraqis rebuild. But for how long, and at what price? (Besides, Powell's stricture would result in many fewer interventions than Podhoretz would like.) Now, it's true that Americans aren't ancient Romans. But far from envisioning a Carthaginian peace in the region, the misnamed Superhawks recommended a war of limited but overwhelming force and firmness now, so as to make unnecessary the continual, stinting, and ineffective use of American force later on, as during most of our occupation.

IN THE EVENT, AMERICA FINDS ITSELF SOMEWHERE in between. Our strategic policy in the larger Middle East has taken a back seat to the war in Iraq. Doubtless we've achieved a certain intimidating effect (though not the one the CRB recommended) summarized in a recent bumper-sticker: Be Nice to Us, or We Will Bring Democracy to You. But our ability to maneuver in the region, and to induce the terror exporters to go out of business, has decreased significantly. (Syria and Iran are probably more active than ever, and the Saudis perhaps only marginally less so.) This strategic blow might be redeemed by the establishment of liberal democratic regimes in Iraq and its neighbors. But this is the final point on which Podhoretz's argument disappoints: is it possible to democratize Iraq, much less "every last one" of its neighbors?

Decent democratic government is always desirable, but each case is different and the question about Iraq is how possible is such a regime? Kirkpatrick explains why it is unlikely, as does Agresto more acutely and expansively. What's remarkable about Podhoretz's attempt to answer the question is how little he says about it. He claims, paradoxically, that the Iraqi insurgency itself is "a tribute to the enormous strides that had been made in democratizing and unifying the country under a workable federal system." Granted, the Sunni insurgents fear democracy in Iraq because the Shiites are the majority. But the Shia and their militias welcome it for the same reason. Neither faction sees democracy, at least yet, as liberal democracy devoted to the equal—and equally God-given—rights of human beings.

Podhoretz avers that the Middle East of today is not "thousands of years old" or the product of "some inexorable historical process powered entirely by internal cultural forces." The states of the region were "all conjured into existence less than one hundred years ago" by the French and British out of the ruins of the defeated Ottoman empire. He concludes, therefore, that there is

nothing utopian about uprooting such regimes, "planted with shallow roots by two Western powers," and "with the help of a third Western power" planting a better political system in their place. Before the French and British and even before the Ottoman empire, of course, the Middle East was not exactly a democratic paradise. The obstacles to democracy are planted deep, and whether American-inspired regimes will outlast those imposed by the British and French is a tougher question than he lets on. Still, he is right to remind us that liberty remains a powerful human longing, despite the obstacles.

IRVING KRISTOL FAMOUSLY DEFINED THE neoconservatives as liberals who had been "mugged by reality." The theme of John Agresto's *Mugged by Reality: The Liberation of Iraq and the Failure of Good Intentions* is that in Iraq it is America and the neocons who have been surprised and assaulted. A neocon himself, Agresto is the former president of St. John's College in Santa Fe who spent nine months in Iraq with the Coalition Provisional Authority advising on the reconstruction of Iraqi higher education. He has written a very good book, modest in its ambition to explain what he saw and did, but ambitious in its desire to make sense of the colossal "failure of good intentions" that he witnessed there. He writes plainly and pungently, and his anecdotes tell us much about Iraq that Americans need to know.

No one arrived in Iraq with higher expectations of the good that could be done than Agresto. Like "absolutely every American I knew in Iraq," he longed to be part of "the liberation of a people from despotism and their entrance into freedom." Almost from the beginning, however, Iraqi reality clashed with his idealism. It was "rather disconcerting," he reports, "to drive by a beggar on the street with a cardboard sign around his neck that read in Arabic, 'Will Kill for Money.'"

The condition of the Iraqi universities was shocking for different reasons. They quickly turned from one of the most pro-American sectors of society to the most anti-American. Once the cult of Saddam was discredited, Islamic fundamentalism rushed in to fill the void. Here and there liberal professors and courageous administrators tried to hold out against the tide of the new fanaticism, but they were soon overwhelmed. Many were assassinated. As in Germany in the 1930s, it was the students who expelled freedom from the campuses, supported by the local sectarian militias. Under Saddam, girls had attended mostly the same schools and classes as boys. Under the new campus regime, classes were segregated, female students had to wear the hijab, and faculty and students alike were forced to abide by religious law. "Whoever has a romantic

notion of students, of their idealism, their open-mindedness, and their liberality," he says, "should take a look at Iraq and think again."

Neither Kirkpatrick nor Podhoretz says much about Islam and its relation to democracy. Agresto confronts the issue boldly. He met many moderate Muslims, but the religion's public tone in Iraq was set by the fundamentalists of every stripe, whom he calls "religious fanatics." Even "the more moderate and less fanatical" Muslims still saw "their version of sectarian truth as more important than general religious toleration." As for the Ayatollah Sistani, renowned in America for his moderating influence and solicitude for elections, Agresto fingers him as "an open anti-Semite" and "not-too-subtle anti-Christian" who is "bent on establishing a theocracy not far removed from that in Iran."

When you add the illiberal propensities of Islam to the cultural effects of a status-based society, socialism, and tyranny, the Iraqis do not exactly look like Jacksonian democrats. Agresto provides a careful, thoughtful analysis of the cultural damage done. Iraq's traditional society of clans and tribes, consumed by a "constant concern with rank, place, and honor," breeds a "culture of entitlement" in which work is despised and accountability shunned. Saddam's government added a "culture of dependency" by addicting everyone to food handouts, subsidized housing, free education, free health care, free electricity, and virtually free gasoline (three cents a liter; like Iran, Iraq exports oil and imports gasoline, making the subsidy doubly ridiculous). And his tyranny engendered a "culture of fear and hesitation" across the board.

The cumulative effect of these factors is an Iraqi character that is not fit for self-government, at least not yet and probably not for a very long time, according to Agresto. "Hard as it is to say," he declares, "still it must be said, that it did not seem that the majority of Iraqis had, or had yet, the souls of free people." He dismisses as "happy talk" President Bush's various assurances to the contrary. All human beings desire to be free? Most Iraqis would choose security over freedom, "and many others would choose being Islamic and submissive to Allah's word over being free any day." All men desire to live as democrats? Most Iraqis "would rather be governed by religious leaders of their own sect than by their neighbors."

In the end, though, what surprised Agresto more than the Iraqis' indifference to democracy was the Americans' ignorance of it. We take it for granted, and have forgotten both the private and civic virtues it requires and the moral principles and constitutional architecture on which it depends.

For instance, in assembling the Iraqi Governing Council and advising the Iraqis later on

their constitution, we (and the United Nations) steered them towards systems of proportional representation by party slate that were guaranteed to exacerbate all the divisions within Iraqi society. But we did not just divide and immobilize the legislature. Rejecting one of America's greatest constitutional achievements, our experts joined in eliminating all prospects of a unitary republican executive. Agresto outlines the seriousness of the problem:

Under the Transitional Administrative Law, there was a prime minister, two presidents, and a presidency council, all at the same time. And now, under the new constitution, there's a prime minister, a separate president with whom he shares executive power, a vice president, two deputy prime ministers, and a cabinet of ministers. Both president and prime minister are drawn separately from the parliament.

Mugged by Reality is less insightful on why neoconservatives were so gung-ho about democratization as the solution to the Middle East's problems. Agresto speculates that the neocons neglected the importance of culture because they had spent so much time studying the thought of ancient Greece, with its emphasis on the discovery of universal truths about human nature and politics. Podhoretz is not that kind of neocon. And it's hard to believe that studying too much Plato was the reason why the flock of neocons influenced by Leo Strauss became enthusiasts of global democracy. It has more to do with their view of American republicanism as essentially modern and rooted in enlightened self-interest, in low but powerful motives available to human beings everywhere.

When combined with the younger neocons' admirable, in a way, desire to ennoble American democracy by enlisting it in popular government's expansion around the world—a crucial part of the "national greatness" agenda—the neoconservative path to Iraq became paved with good intentions. As a corrective, Agresto recommends that his fellow neocons

listen to more old-fashioned conservatives who know something about the fallenness of our natures, conservatives who know the ease with which we war against each other when not held in check by moderating institutions, civic virtue, and mild rather than furious religious teachings.

That's good advice for anyone who doesn't want to be mugged again by reality.

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VICTORY WATCH
by Angelo M. Codevilla

AMERICAN STATECRAFT AND THE IRAQ WAR



MIDDLE EASTERN REGIMES HAVE waged war against America and the West since the 1960s. Because the U.S. government's occupation of Iraq violated the principles of statecraft, America is on the verge of losing a crucial round in that long war. And the responsibility for this impending debacle rests squarely on the uncomprehending U.S. foreign policy establishment—the officials, advisors, bureaucrats, prestige intellectuals, think-tank scholars, and journalists who have misunderstood what America is up against in the Middle East and mistaken our true national interest.

The occupation was unnecessary to any rational American purpose. As President George W. Bush spoke on April 30, 2003, under the banner "Mission Accomplished," representatives of the State and Defense Departments in Iraq were putting the finishing touches on the provisional government to which they were to devolve the country's affairs two weeks later. *There was to be no occupation.* Iraqis would sort out their own bloody quarrels. The victorious U.S. armed forces, having turned Saddam Hussein's regime over to its enemies, would challenge the Middle East's remaining terror regimes to adjust their behavior or suffer the same fate. But even as Bush seemed to be recruiting a sovereign Iraqi government, he was interviewing the disastrous Paul "Jerry" Bremer to be Iraq's viceroy and preparing United Nations resolution 1483 to "legitimize" the occupation. The Bush team then declared that occupying Iraq was necessary to transform it into a peaceful, united,

liberal democracy, whose existence would coax nasty neighboring regimes to be nice. Bush had acceded to the private pleadings of then-Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, as well as of British Prime Minister Tony Blair—whose advice reflected the unanimous wishes of Arab governments. While the administration's newly minted mission was abstract and inherently beyond accomplishment, the Arab agendas—which had nothing in common with Bush's—were intensely practical. And they prevailed.

The occupation of Iraq should go down in history as a set of negative lessons about war, the relationship between ends and means, the need for unity of purpose and command, and dealing with the world as it is rather than as one imagines it to be. The occupation, a confection of the U.S. foreign policy establishment's hoariest recipes, is yet more evidence of that establishment's bankruptcy. Media myth notwithstanding, the administration's neoconservative component was sidelined as the occupation began. Bremer's political advisor was the realist Robert Blackwill of the Council on Foreign Relations, and his military advisor was Walter Slocombe, a liberal internationalist from the Carter and Clinton Administrations. By 2007 the occupation's military policy was being shaped by Stephen Biddle, another Kissingerian realist from the Council, for whom success means persuading somebody to accept America's surrender. Bush confused statecraft, the pursuit of the country's interests, with administrative politics—the consensus of constituencies in

the bureaucracies (and their contractors), the prestige media, and the academy. As the disaster became undeniable, no one in the establishment dared to try to measure the occupation of Iraq against the standards of statecraft.

This essay is such an attempt. It draws from my own observation of events, as well as from books that have chronicled one or another aspect of the occupation. Bob Woodward's trilogy (which I reviewed in the Spring 2003 and Winter 2006/07 issues of the CRB) gives us a fly-on-the-wall view of the Bush team's deliberations. Ali Allawi's *The Occupation of Iraq* is a masterly history of the occupation from the standpoint of the occupied; it shows us what the various parts of Iraqi society have been concerned with and why, and therefore lets us see why the occupation could hardly have been other than foredoomed. John Agresto's *Mugged by Reality* is a thoughtful description of the confrontation between a neoconservative's ideals and Iraqi realities. In my "Victory Watch" series, the first installment of which was written within weeks of 9/11, I showed how the Bush team had failed in war's most essential task: the designation of the enemy whose undoing would give us the peace we want. I pointed out that overthrowing America's enemies made inherent sense, but that it made no sense to invade Iraq (or anyplace else) without quite knowing why.

Occupying Iraq, while Iraqis fought Iraqis for Iraqi stakes, made sense only to the U.S. foreign policy establishment. At odds with itself concerning who were our enemies and what

were our objectives in this war, the establishment on which Bush relied never developed a coherent American agenda, but oscillated between various European and Middle Eastern agendas. Misunderstanding the character and especially the religion of the Iraqis and other Middle Easterners, our experts fostered illusions about what was and was not possible.

War and Military Force

ON SEPTEMBER 11, THE AMERICAN people recognized as war the hijackings, bombings, and murders in the name of Arab causes that have gnawed at our peace for a generation. The millions who cheered the New York firemen's flag over the Twin Towers' rubble joined the rescue workers' shouts to George W. Bush: "Whatever it takes! Whatever it takes!" Wholly empowered, Bush declared war first on Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, as if their elimination would by itself make America safe, and then on "extremism" and later "Islamofascism." These enemy "isms" served the fiction that the secular Arab regimes were allies in the "war on terror." Until Syria's 2005 murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, the U.S. government—led by the CIA—imagined that Damascus was an ally, and accepted at face value its "intelligence" about terrorism. The CIA even imagined that it had privileged relations with elements of Iraqi intelligence. But after 9/11 neither the elimination of al-Qaeda's base in the Indian subcontinent nor the chasing of Muslim guerrillas in the world's backwaters would keep the "war on terror" from looking phony. Circumstances—and the American people—demanded forcing some kind of attitude adjustment on the Arab world. Saddam's Iraq was the only Arab regime with which the U.S. government was not enamored. But the U.S. government disagreed within itself about whether to overthrow Saddam, and about much else. Searching for a rationalization to please as many and displease as few constituencies as possible, Bush settled on saving the world from Saddam's weapons of mass destruction. But as I wrote in 2002, this political lowest common denominator provided no guidance about whom the troops should kill in order to accomplish what political end, and amounted to "leading with America's political chin."

Even before the invasion, the various Iraqi factions had been pursuing their incompatible agendas. But this cockpit of pent-up conflicts need not have concerned America had the U.S. government carried through with its announced intention to let the Iraqis rule themselves. Almost as reasonably, the U.S. could have chosen sides among Iraq's contenders, helping some

fulfill their dreams at the others' expense—the age-old imperial recipe. But at the State Department and the CIA, the partisans of occupation were never disposed to force their imperial preference—a milder version of secular Sunni dominance—on the Iraqis. Working as they did under the banner of democracy, State and the CIA's limited efforts on behalf of their favored Iraqi group (also that of the Saudis, Egyptians, and Jordanians)—the Sunni Arabs—fostered only vain hopes and fruitless strife. Moreover, few of these half-hearted imperialists realized how thoroughly the religious, social, and cultural identity of Iraq's Shia majority had been subsumed by political movements; nor did they anticipate that the Sunni minority would refuse

Books discussed in this essay:

The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace, by Ali A. Allawi.
Yale University Press, 544 pages, \$28

Mugged by Reality: The Liberation of Iraq and the Failure of Good Intentions,
by John Agresto. Encounter Books,
202 pages, \$25.95

Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA,
by Tim Weiner. Doubleday,
702 pages, \$27.95

to accept the loss of political power and socioeconomic primacy inevitable in the fall of the Ba'ath party dictatorship—their dictatorship. In short, the authors of the occupation imagined that the Iraqis could easily be induced to forget the things that were most precious to them, and to reconcile themselves to a regime invented for them in Washington.

What would be the role of the U.S. armed forces in all this? Ali Allawi, a former minister of defense and of the interior in post-Saddam Iraq, writes that the Americans' pervasive searches of houses for weapons and suspects—families roused from their intimacies, men imprisoned at the soldiers' discretion—as well as searches at checkpoints, humiliated and made enemies of millions of Iraqis. But indiscriminate searches were evidence of military malpractice: failure at the highest level to distinguish enemies we wanted to crush from whatever groups might be disposed to join in the crushing of their enemies. For what were our troops searching? For weapons? But lots of people had weapons. Common sense says that weapons in some hands serve our purposes, while weapons in other hands work against us. But U.S. soldiers were ordered to disarm Iraqis on all sides. Our troops were

not to be on anybody's side, but rather to foster reconciliation, supposing that the population was eager for it, and to target the few irreconcilables, supposedly spread evenly among all groups. Over and above the unreality of these apolitical suppositions (about which more below), the inescapable consequence of U.S. leaders' failure to identify our enemies was that it forced American soldiers to treat every Iraqi as one. Because American soldiers occupying Iraq were not sent to kill anyone in particular, many paid with their lives for not being trigger-happy enough, while in turn many Iraqis died when soldiers, for whom self-preservation became the default mission, proved too trigger-happy.

On April 25, 2007, as U.S. casualties in Iraq neared 30,000 and the U.S. government was rushing more troops to patrol Baghdad's streets, Major General Robert H. Scales, Jr., former commandant of the U.S. Army War College, recited to the Senate Armed Services Committee what had become the military's mantra: we need culturally aware soldiers who can solve complex social problems. "A corporal standing guard in Baghdad or Fallujah can commit an act that might well affect the strategic outcome of an entire campaign.... Killing power is of no use unless a soldier on patrol knows who to kill." Nodding senators agreed with the general that the job of telling friend from foe belongs to the soldiers in harm's way, not to those who sit in safety regulating, equipping, and ordering them! This abdication, this downward buck-passing and all its consequences, is the logical outcome of President Bush's sending troops around the world without telling them clearly whom they should kill.

The U.S. government knew well enough that nearly all of those shooting at U.S. soldiers were Sunni Arabs, usually attached to Saddam's Ba'ath party, who were using foreign Wahabi suicide bombers—usually Saudis—as ordnance. Nevertheless, its response to the Sunni insurgency has been to try to co-opt it by arming and empowering those Sunni Ba'athist military figures who promise somehow to temper attacks on Americans. This purchase of truces as if there were no tomorrow was the hallmark of General David Petraeus's 2003 command in Mosul. It was the thinking behind turning Fallujah over to a Ba'athist general in 2004, who, in turn, made it into the insurrection's citadel. It is also, alas, the thinking behind the plan for extricating U.S. forces while maintaining a veneer of success that Petraeus was sent to execute in 2007, especially in Anbar province. The plan consisted of sending some 35,000 additional U.S. troops to provide "security" in Anbar province by working with some Sunnis, and in Baghdad by working against some Shia. Achieving lower U.S. body counts

would underpin claims of success. But because one side's security is another's insecurity, troops on the ground know that "security" is inherently meaningless. This demoralized them, strengthened America's worst enemies among the Sunnis, and convinced the majority Shia that America was intent on double-crossing them. Whatever tactical victories the surge may bring, it is a formula for strategic defeat. Refusing to choose sides, the U.S. armed forces end up the enemy of all—and, surely worst of all, feared by none.

Itemizing the instances of the occupation's military malpractice is beyond my scope here. Note simply that most U.S. casualties result from roadside bombs—mines. Military manuals are clear about minefields: if they cannot be avoided, they must be cleared and crossed, *once*. The notion of living and driving around in replenished minefields, day after day, year after year, is contrary to military common sense. So is the notion of "nation-building." Armies don't build nations. If statesmen can point to people or things whose absence would do good, armies can kill or destroy them. But the most unnatural thing you can ever do with or to any army is to turn it from combat to occupation. After Vietnam, the U.S. officer corps resolved never to repeat the experience. Today's officers apparently like to talk as if occupation is the "new kind of war," and thus busy themselves buying new armor and perfecting techniques for searching houses. One wonders why. Better tactics can't rescue bad strategy.

Clashing Agendas

OCCUPATION POLICY WAS BASED SUBSTANTIALLY on the views of U.S. intelligence. Though the CIA station in Baghdad has over 500 officers, only a tiny handful speak Arabic well, fewer venture outside the Green Zone, and none could pass as anything but American. Even the armed forces, which have far more intimate contact with the population, are primarily the recipient of "intelligence" that reflects the agendas of the Iraqis supplying it. But since the CIA is dealing with less obviously verifiable matters, it is far more vulnerable to manipulation; doubly so, because it relies on the Iraqi intelligence service, made up largely of holdovers from the Saddam regime, with whom the CIA imagines it shares an agenda, and on "liaison relationships" with the Arab world's intelligence services. Thus do the Arab regimes mainline their agendas into the U.S. government.

Just how prone the CIA is to being manipulated continues to amaze. My own experience has been that, led by the CIA, the "intelligence community" passes rumors and disinformation

up the line along with facts, displaying more regard for its own prejudices than for accuracy; and then repeats, masticates, and hypostatizes it all into official truths. I had thought it did this *unconsciously*. But in *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*, published in June, Tim Weiner of the *New York Times* cites a report by the CIA's Inspector General, which shows that, between 1986 and 1994, the CIA passed to the president and cabinet reports from agents in the Soviet Union/Russia that it believed were controlled by the KGB. Doing so, says the report, was easier than admitting ignorance or failure. Moreover, senior officials believed the agent reports, albeit tainted, were telling the president things he needed to hear. This is not to say that U.S. intelligence is to blame for the U.S. government's collective mistakes in Iraq. But it is part of the problem.

The U.S. foreign policy establishment's vision of Iraq was of a country united and governed by a secular elite that would transcend confessional and racial differences. But those differences would not be transcended, except by violence. A vision at odds with reality could not be the basis of an agenda. Ali Allawi writes perceptively of "power struggles pitting all kinds of groups against each other, of which the CPA [Coalition Provisional Authority; effectively, the U.S.] was willfully ignorant. The problem was that the Coalition's project for Iraq was ill thought out and poorly executed. Its opponents knew what they wanted." Again, "America's only allies in Iraq were those who sought to manipulate the great power to their narrow advantage." By early 2004 nothing was left of the neoconservative agenda of democratic reform, except rhetoric and commitment to elections. The liberal internationalist agenda of secular nation-building attempted to merge piecemeal the clashing interests of Iraqi and American interest groups. The realist agenda, which dominated the occupation, consisted of trying one way after another to conciliate the Sunnis by empowering them, as well as to reconcile somehow the incompatible agendas of the region's various protagonists while pretending, vaguely, that America's interests were being served. The Bush team had too many agendas, and none.

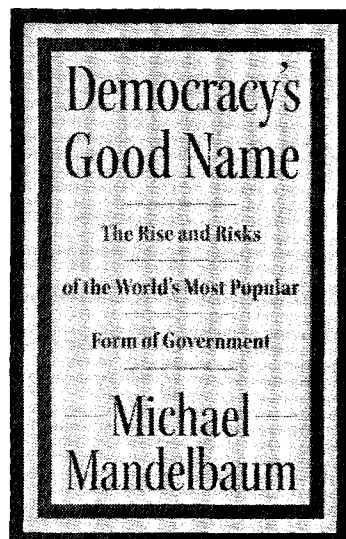
The Kurds wanted to retreat from Iraq in pursuit of ever greater independence. They would not even think of giving up their *peshmerga*, their army. The Turks sought above all to minimize Kurdish independence. Unwilling to invade Kurdistan lest they aggravate their domestic Kurdish problem, the Turks prodded the U.S. to satisfy their concerns. The Saudi and Gulf regimes, oppressors of large Shia populations within their own borders and terrified of the prospect that Iraq's Shia majority

would arouse them by freeing itself from Sunni dominance, sought to restore as much of the Ba'athist regime as possible. On the one hand, they provided the Sunni insurgents with money and fighters; on the other, they warned the U.S. about the instability that they were themselves fostering. Moreover, they persuaded Americans that the Shia were agents of Iranian imperialism. The occupation allowed the double-dealing Arab regimes to focus their peoples' hate on America (and away from their own detestable selves) while at the same time using America for their own anti-Shia and anti-Iranian purposes. The Arab double game was not as remarkable as America's acquiescence in it. Not until August 2007 did the U.S. secretary of state and secretary of defense protest to the Saudis the war they were waging against Shia and U.S. troops in Iraq. But the Americans muffled their weak protest by declaring solidarity with the Sunni world against Iran, and promising to sell the Saudis American precision-guided bombs.

Iraq's Sunni Arabs, who after coming under Saudi Wahabi influence loathed the Shia more than ever, sought to force the Americans to re-empower them, to somehow restore the Sunnis' leading role in the country's institutions—especially the military and secret services. The Shia majority included the millions of slum dwellers whom the Ayatollah Muhammad al-Sadr had helped and organized in the darkest years of Saddam's tyranny, and who now followed his son Muqtada, and it embraced several political parties with more or less Islamist agendas. All followed the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. Having lost thousands to Sunni violence, the Shia sought safety through control of the Iraqi army, police, intelligence, and their own militias. The Iranians rejoiced in their Iraqi coreligionists' newfound freedom, and looked to safeguard it against the Sunni insurgency supported by the Arab regimes, as well as against America's betrayal. The Iranians dreamt of expanding a crescent of Shia power from Iraq to Lebanon that would liberate the Arab world's minorities, increasingly oppressed by increasingly Wahabi Sunnis.

The U.S. government fishtailed between these exigencies and called it an agenda. Allawi writes that during the neoconservatives' early ascendancy, America tilted towards the Shia and the Kurds, because it regarded the Saudi monarchy "as the guilty party in the radicalization of Sunni Islam and as an 'unindicted co-conspirator' in the 9/11 outrages." But this ended quickly. Bush would not "jettison long-term allies or at least reduce reliance on them." And whereas the U.S. had expected that the Iraqi Shia would elect liberals, they found instead that the Shia were listening to ayatollahs and saw Iran as a friend.

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The "second phase" of U.S. policy, writes Allawi, was fulfilled in the spring 2004 installation of the interim government. It reversed allegiances and empowered as many people as reassuring to the Sunnis as possible, including a minister of defense, a chief of the army, and a head of the intelligence service, who together led a wholesale "return of Ba'athists to public service." But this aggressively secular "national security state," headed by the longtime CIA agent Iyad Allawi, frightened the "empowered Shia groups lurking in the wings." As an "attempt to undercut the appeal and spread of the insurgency by appeasing and empowering part of its 'moderate' political base," the U.S. ploy was "forlorn and foredoomed." The Sunnis escalated their insurgency, fighting less against the U.S. than for power over the Shia. American liberals and realists wanted to postpone the January 2005 elections in order to sweeten the Sunnis' pot further. But the Shia were the majority, America had promised elections, and the ayatollahs insisted on them. The U.S. campaigned for its Iraqi proxies. They came in last. *Vox populi*.

But whereas democracy means government by those who win elections, *vox Bushi* decreed it should mean that winners and losers must govern together for ends beloved by neither. In 2005, Allawi writes, the U.S. "adopted a new policy direction, premised on coaxing credible representatives of the Sunni Arabs into the political process"—meaning into power. While earlier it had sought to placate the Sunnis by excluding the Shia majority's unofficial leaders from office, suddenly the U.S. sought to persuade these same leaders, now elected by the voters, to act against the wishes of those voters. The U.S. also placed unelected Sunnis in positions of power and ran the Iraqi army and intelligence service as if Iraqi elected officials didn't exist. At the same time, the U.S. urged these elected officials, some of whom also led Shia religious groups, to disband Shia militias. But the more the U.S. exercised Sunni-friendly control over the army and police, the more desperately did the Shia cling to the only forces they really trusted. The more the U.S. government talked about the danger of Iranian influence, the more the Shia saw the Americans as ignorant pawns of the Saudi Wahabis—blood enemies of the Shia as deadly as Saddam had been. The Wahabis' near genocide of the Shia around Karbala in the 19th century is burned in every Shi'ite's historical memory.

Statecraft would have required viewing Iraq's realities—which reflected the growing worldwide enmity between Sunni and Shia, between Arabs and Persians—from the standpoint of what America could do to crush or cow regimes that export terror, whether Arab

or Persian, Sunni or Shia. After the invasion, only our occupation prevented Iraq's Shia majority from ripping out the Ba'ath party's last bloody roots, both to avenge its tyranny and because it is Sunni. Had the Shia done this, the Arab world's Sunni regimes would have begged America not to let the same fate befall them. The Shia, for their part, would not have had to be persuaded by what America had done for them, but would have been impressed by what it could let happen to them. The lesson for all would have been that America turns its enemies over to *their enemies'* tender mercies. In short, statecraft would have meant subordinating the wishes of the Iranian, Turk, and Arab regimes to American interests—not fighting their battles for them or trying to compose their differences. America fights only its own enemies. Only by denying the logic of statecraft did occupying Iraq make sense. But once the occupation commenced and reality began to bite, only a double denial of statecraft's logic prevented our establishment from enabling one side's victory over the others, or crushing all.

Religion, Character, and Democracy

THE FOREIGN POLICY ESTABLISHMENT in the U.S. is "value free," and politically neutral logic is part of a mentality that also misunderstands religion, democracy, and conflict. Because the U.S. foreign policy establishment is religiously illiterate, because none of its members can imagine serious people taking God seriously, it cannot understand a world that is overwhelmingly religious. Having concluded that mankind is outgrowing religion, our experts react to religion's presence in the Islamic world—and in America—by inventing the distinction between "moderate" religion, acceptable because not taken seriously, and "fundamentalism," i.e., actually believing in God and His commandments, the immoderate first of which reads in part: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

For those who see the world through this lens, no religion is better or worse than any other, and certainly no truer, and the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy is merely that between winners and losers. Hence U.S. establishmentarians, who regard all religion as hokum, cannot fathom the differences between the Sunni and Shia variants of Islam, which mean so much to Muslims. Hence our experts have also been unable to tell the difference between serious Muslims and the secular legions that clothe their hate and contempt for us in Muslim garb. Our establishment thinks that because religion is the mother of strife, the enemy of modernity, it must be humored and subdued in the short term, then marginalized

and eventually eliminated. This mindset prevents intelligent judgment about why we might prefer some religious expressions to others, and ensures the enmity of all who believe in God.

John Agresto, the former president of St. John's College, Santa Fe, who became the American advisor in charge of reconstructing Iraq's higher education during the occupation, writes that "the single most important 'neoconservative' rationale for the liberation of Iraq and the connection between that liberation and the war on terror" was beckoning the Muslim world to follow the West into modernity, which he (as an East Coast Straussian) defines as turning "our eyes from up to down—from heaven toward the things of this world." In this world, religion can serve to moderate pursuit of "the self-interest" that is the essence of "modernity." The occupation's aim was "to get the Iraqis to go to the mall instead of the mosque." Realists and liberals would not have put it so elegantly, but they agreed. Unfortunately, the occupation's depreciation of religion made it seem that Americans endangered their souls as well as their bodies. Any believer in God should have regarded this attitude as an insulting invitation to corruption, an attack on his identity.

In the decades before the invasion, the social, economic, and political identities of the Sunni and Shia communities had merged with their religion more than ever before and hardened divisions between them. Those identities diverged in the struggles over Mohammed's succession in the 7th century A.D. The Shia lost out, and, except in Iran, have been the Muslim world's oppressed minority ever since. Separate clerical hierarchies produced theological differences, as well as important philosophical ones having to do with the role of reason. Saddam's Iraq oppressed and murdered the Shia far more than even Saudi Arabia had, driving the co-religionists together. Then, after 1991, Saddam eased up a bit on Shia organizations, perhaps confident that he had domesticated them and partly because he sought to ride the rising tiger of political Islam. As a result, by the time Saddam was overthrown, religious authority was the Iraqi Shia's only source of guidance and succor. Moreover, growing Wahabism had increased the Sunnis' traditional loathing of Shia, and hence, in turn, the Shias' fear of the Sunni. Officially, three out of five Iraqis are Shia. But the Kurds' retreat into their enclave means that Arab Iraq has three Shia for every Sunni. That is why the 2003 invasion opened the door to the Shias' dreams and to the Sunnis' nightmares.

What is not so easy to understand is why anyone championing democracy would be shocked that voters would choose to be governed by people who at least pretend to think and believe as they do. John Agresto, mugged

by reality, now understands that elections will reflect the people's character, and that the Muslim world's character is inherently illiberal. Hence any truly Muslim democracy must be illiberal. Moreover, when peoples' identities are defined by their enmities, democracy can only enable those enmities.

Allawi and Agresto agree in describing the often selfish, corrupt, and cruel character of the Iraqi people. The Iraqis' understanding of their religion is consistent with this way of life. But these realities—hardly secrets—mugged Agresto, and the policy of occupation that he served, because his mind was restricted by one version or another of the narrow discipline of Western modernity. Agresto's supposition, that the liberality, devotion to truth, decency, friendship, and tolerance that mark American democracy come from the "taming" of Christianity by modern selfishness, is one of those intellectual flowers that can only thrive in highly controlled environments.

A Typical Performance

WHAT FOLLOWS FROM THE FOREIGN policy establishment's apolitical division of mankind into "moderates" and "extremists" is an art of politics, if that's the right term, that prevents considering what anyone is, or should be, moderate or extreme about. It abstracts from right and wrong, honor and shame. It leads to moderation in pursuit of America's interests. Then, in the hope of avoiding worse threats to our modest interests, it leads to finding moderation in those who threaten us. It becomes the promotion of "moderation" for its own sake, and then boils down to coaxing "extremists" into "moderation" by involving them in profitable and (supposedly) addictive arrangements. Our establishmentarians imagine they can moderate our enemies by promising them that they can get most of what they want through cooperation; and tell the American people that if we were to forcefully oppose our enemies, that would only radicalize them further.

During the Cold War, this logic led from Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman's support of the "moderate" Stalin against the phantom "extremist anti-party group" to Henry Kissinger's détente with the Soviet Union; from President George H.W. Bush's efforts to keep Mikhail Gorbachev's "moderate" Soviet Union alive to his successors' efforts to appease the neo-Soviet Vladimir Putin by limiting U.S. missile defenses to tokens. By this logic, the more anyone threatens, the greater the incentive to treat him as a "moderate," lest he threaten us more. In our time this has been the basis of the bloody "peace processes" that the U.S. has foisted on so much of the world.

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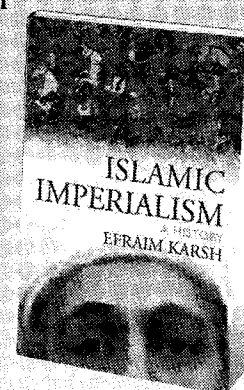
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As the establishment encountered Middle Eastern terrorism, it strove to designate as "moderates" the states, groups, and individuals involved with it, and to "get them on our side" by making as many concessions as possible to them. The apotheosis of such thinking is, of course, the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Yasser Arafat, his invitation to speak to the U.N. General Assembly (though he represented no state and wore a gun), the grant to him of near-state power over the Palestinians, and the flow (through him) of more foreign-aid money per capita than has ever been bestowed on any people in history. U.S. officials did not doubt that it was Arafat's voice they heard in a phone intercept ordering the 1973 murder of U.S. ambassador Cleo Noel. Nor did anyone doubt that he had ordered the massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972, or any number of other murders; and his control of such murder franchises as Force 17 and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' brigade went undisputed. Our experts overlooked as well his organization's indoctrination of children into suicide bombing. These blind eyes were considered necessary to stave off the ascendancy of *really* "extreme" people. It was enough for U.S. officials to hear Arafat and his PLO's disclaimer that the terrorists they paid (usually with U.S. money) to slaughter innocents, and whom Arafat praised to the heavens, were acting on their own. If America could just squeeze some more concessions from Israel, this "moderate"—and later his even more "moderate" successor, Mahmoud Abbas—could deliver some diminution of terrorism. The concessions came, the Americans delivered tons of arms and intelligence equipment to the PLO—and its terrorism proliferated. Meanwhile, the PLO's "extreme" competitor, Hamas, decided it could enrich and empower itself by playing the same game. No sooner did Hamas oust the PLO from Gaza in June 2007 than the U.S. government sent the group \$20 million in "humanitarian" aid, a first token of recognition as "moderate."

The establishment behaved toward Arab terrorist states as it did toward terrorist individuals and groups. After all, inspiration, money, and organization for anti-American terrorism does not come from Mars. It comes from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Qatar, Iran, and elsewhere; until 2003 it came from Iraq. The official disclaimer that these states' media, schools, and private wealth and infrastructure enable terrorism, independent of government authority, is as incredible as the PLO's. These regimes embody anti-American causes. If they treated anti-U.S. terrorism as they do terrorism against themselves, the world would sleep safely. One reason they do not is that the U.S. designates them as "moderates," making their activities acceptable and their goals generally

praiseworthy. Indeed, preserving these regimes' health and comfort has been one of the U.S. establishment's prime concerns. By contrast, statecraft is about *our* national interest.

The occupation of Iraq, and the way it was managed, was another expression of our establishment's art of politics. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, the U.S. government did not pursue a distinctly American agenda. Rather, it sought to please as many of Iraq's neighbors as possible. The Saudis wanted relief from the military-political pressure that Saddam's conquest of Kuwait had generated. The Syrians wanted their Ba'athist rival's wings clipped. The Egyptians and other Arab governments, worried that their peoples might find Saddam attractive, also wanted him taken down a peg. But all, including the Turks, feared that Saddam's fall would lead to Iraq's breakup—which the Iranians craved. Had the U.S. government avoided the Gulf War and continued sponsoring Saddam as it had been doing, it might have ridden him to greater influence than ever over his weak neighbors. On the other hand, having decided that Saddam was bidding to lead the Arab world into even greater enmity and contempt for America, the U.S. might easily have overthrown him, and let the Sunni Arab world deal with the fact that Iraq's Shia majority would be free and pro-Iranian. Either of those courses of action would have left America's real and potential enemies weaker and seeking America's favor. Instead, as a favor to the Sunni Arab world, American troops killed and died to do Saddam a little harm. America's pursuit of moderation earned it more hatred and contempt. As a result of having withstood America and of having put on Islamic airs, Saddam became the Arab world's prime engine of anti-Americanism.

When, after 9/11, the Bush Administration decided once and for all to rid America of Saddam, it did not at the same time rid itself of the approach to international affairs that had turned military victory into strategic defeat in 1990-91. Rhetoric aside, its strategic priorities in 2003 were identical to those of the previous decade: catering to the Sunni Arab world's supposedly "moderate" interests. Arab governments strongly opposed the invasion. But once it happened, they just as strongly demanded, *for the same reason*, that the U.S. occupy Iraq: above all, they wanted Iraq's Shia majority to be kept under some sort of Sunni control. That meant keeping Iraq together, but keeping its majority from ruling. Our establishment answered the call by occupying Iraq for half a decade, tergiversating between democracy, meaning Shia power, and "national unity," code for re-empowering Sunnis. No surprise then that the U.S. government's penultimate

act in Iraq, the "surge" begun in 2007, aimed to arm as many Sunni militias as would take U.S. arms, ostensibly to fight other Sunnis we choose to call al-Qaeda, and to forcefully suppress some Shia militias in Baghdad. The media have passed along the U.S. government's ignorant acceptance of some terrorists' baseless self-identification as al-Qaeda, and "Liaison Services" reports that this or that group is part of al-Qaeda. The original al-Qaeda, made up of "Afghan Arabs," was never much and is mostly gone. But countless people use the name to frighten America and to shield their sponsors. Labeling Sunni violence al-Qaeda lets the U.S. government pretend that the struggle in Iraq is not between Iraqis for Iraqi stakes, with Sunnis supported by Arabs and Shia supported by Persians. Credulity covers its continuing effort to co-opt the Sunnis. Thus did our establishment further enable Iraq's factions to fight one another, and motivate all to fight us.

But note well: all of the above policies work against the interest of the United States, which is to force Arab rulers to clamp down on any and all who might harm Americans, lest the Arab rulers themselves be killed.

Ending It

WITHDRAW? IN WHOSE FAVOR? TO accomplish what? Depending on how we do it, withdrawing from Iraq must advantage some and disadvantage others—just as our entering Iraq and our staying there advantaged some against others. To what extent is anyone's advantage also America's? In 2007, as in 2003 and 2001, our establishment has refused to consider these questions because it is unwilling to deal with the fundamental reality of international affairs, namely that it involves dealing with foreigners in conflict with each other, whom we can neither govern nor police, and that it is all about pursuing our interests, not theirs.

No one doubted in 2001 any more than when terrorism started in the 1960s that the terrorists were Arabs from Arab countries fighting for causes that those countries supported, and that, as Thomas Friedman has written, 98% of terrorism is what regimes want to happen or let happen. Nevertheless, our establishment sought to deal with terrorism as if it were some disembodied "extremism" extraneous to Arab states and their conflicts, and sought to displease these regimes as little as possible. But the occupation has (almost) taught our experts that terror is the Middle East's political currency, and that the immediate problem in Iraq is part of the larger struggle between Sunni and Shia, Arabs and Persians, Saudis and Iranians. So let us see how we can end this war in our interest.

First, we must abandon the nonsense about reconciling Iraqis. Whether or how Iraqis reconcile is their business. As for evenhandedness, we shall be unevenly on our own side. The only Iraqi groups who have ever had anything to do with anti-American terror are Sunni. Keeping them out of power in Baghdad will require only that we stop arming Sunnis. Absent our interference, the Shia will make short work of them in the capital. Neither the Saudis nor the Syrians can invade to save Baghdad's Sunni remnant. Both would want to send money and fighters, however, to the poor rump region in western Iraq where the Sunni population would concentrate. But perhaps even without American or Iranian encouragement, these states' Shia populations would give their regimes enough trouble to keep them busy at home. Of course Iraq would be divided, as Bosnia is. Dealing with three distinct interests is better than with a single confused set.

Our establishment's problems in Iraq stem from its crazy commitment to the Saudis' and other Sunnis' struggle against Shia Iran. Designating the Sunni world as Islam's "moderate" wing, despite the increasing influence of Saudi Wahabism within it, takes no small dishonesty. So does forgetting that the overwhelming majority of anti-American terrorists, their media, and their money come from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Gulf states, and Palestine—the Sunni world. Nor will the excuse wash that appeasing the Sunni world is some kind of shield against Iran's soon-to-be nuclear armament. How could that be? Moreover, Iran's nukes would be directed at the Sunni world foremost—just as a hypothetical Egyptian or Saudi bomb would be directed against Iran. Israel seems to have followed us in a de facto alliance with the Sunni world against Iran. But that the Saudis, et al., might shield Israel against Iran is even less plausible than that they might shield America. Since we Americans have even less control than we have interest in this struggle, we should not make it ours nor export silly notions.

Our interest lies in being feared and respected by both sides. Secretary of State Rice's and Defense Secretary Gates's statements in July and August 2007 that amount to verbal co-belligerency with Saudis against Iranians frighten no one. Their promises of U.S. precision-guided bombs for Saudis should frighten Americans as well as Israelis. Their assurance that each shot will hit its mark will prove an irresistible temptation to some of the Saudi regime's many factions to send some pilots to do spectacular damage. Instead of arming the Saudis, we should awaken their ultimate fear—revolt of their Shia and Hashemite elements. This would be the natural result of our withdrawing from Iraq and leaving the Shia in control of Baghdad. Shutting off access to U.S. visas for

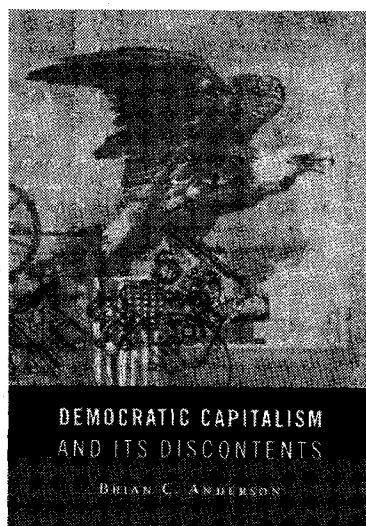
Saudi citizens, the expulsion from the U.S. of Wahabi clergy and of Wahabi "charities," would betoken our seriousness. Holding Saudi oil revenues liable to attachment—to compensate for damages caused by terrorist incidents attributable to Saudi citizens—would be a further step. Conveying seriousness to Iran is no bigger problem. In Lebanon, Iran has waged proxy war through Hezbollah. It is easy enough to test its claim that it is doing so to relieve Sunni oppression of Lebanon's Shia: in exchange for Iran dismantling Lebanon's Hezbollah, the U.S. would stop supporting the country's constitutional arrangements and political parties that disadvantage the Shia. Iran's ultimate wish is that the U.S. switch sides and support all Shia against all Sunnis. While granting that wish would be foolish, getting off the Sunni side of the street is in our interest as well as Iran's. But the Iranians should know that if they wanted to be enemies, we would oblige them seriously, first by placing a naval blockade until they dropped Hezbollah and other manifestations of enmity.

The occupation of Iraq was a bad idea. But it must end in a way that diminishes the contempt for America that it has so richly earned. The only way to banish contempt is to act forcefully on our own behalf.

There is no excuse for losing a war. Those whose disregard for statecraft is responsible for this mess are more highly credentialed, paid, and honored than they deserve. Empowered to do away with anti-American terrorism, they could not decide whom to kill. Instead they decided to station the flower of the U.S. armed forces among the warring subjects of a former empire while they themselves, either in Washington or in its extension in Baghdad's fortified Green Zone, cajoled and bribed locals to implement the half-baked plans that emerged from their ever-changing bureaucratic balances of power. Incompetence about so many things over such a long period of time disqualifies them from being taken seriously ever again, and discredits the institutions, foundations, and publications that have accredited them. It challenges us to ascertain what intellectual viruses disabled otherwise functional minds, and to educate leaders who will be free of them.

Angelo M. Codevilla is professor of international relations at Boston University, a senior fellow of the Claremont Institute, and Vice Chairman of the U.S. Army War College Board of Visitors. His *Advice for War Presidents* will be published by Basic Books in 2008.

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Book Review by Algis Valiunas

ARYAN SISTER

Leni Riefenstahl: A Life, by Jürgen Trimborn, translated by Edna McCown.
Faber & Faber, 368 pages, \$30

Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl, by Steven Bach.
Alfred A. Knopf, 400 pages, \$30



LENI RIEFENSTAHL, THE THIRD REICH'S great documentary filmmaker, had what a high school coach of mine used to call, when the poetic fit came upon him, testicular fortitude. She combined this virile will and boldness with outrageous feminine wiles to make a dazzling career in one of the most exclusive men's clubs ever. By her own account in the voluminous 1987 *Memoir*, at her first meeting with Hitler she dressed him down for his anti-Semitism, whereupon he made a clumsy pass at her, which she expertly deflected; she had him in her pocket thereafter. Understanding the value of deftly contrived misapprehension, she also put a host of subordinate Nazis in her pocket by creating the impression that she just might be the Führer's bunkmate. Another party chieftain took a shine to her, and a shot at her, as well. Again according to her telling, Joseph Goebbels, the scaly and sexually promiscuous Minister of National Enlightenment and Propaganda, literally groveled at her feet with lust, while she barely restrained herself from trampling his reptilian person in the dirt. Although she spurned these supreme eminences of the Nazi regime, she was not exactly discriminating about the men she did sleep with. On a movie set early in her acting career, she pretty much serviced the troops, and in de-

scending order of cinematic importance, moving blithely from director to co-stars to cameraman to ski instructor. And yet this Amazon, who lived as freely as any whoring sailor, could weep and tear her hair on cue, instantly turning on the waterworks at the mere hint of manly interference with her artistic integrity. Beauty was her holy grail, she would always insist; politics really did not concern her. She remained a true artist, a perfect innocent, all her life long. Again by her own account.

Two recent biographies put her own account to the test and find it wanting in the extreme. Jürgen Trimborn, a professor of film, theater, and art history at the University of Cologne, the author of *Leni Riefenstahl: A Life*, and Steven Bach, a former United Artists producer and biographer of Marlene Dietrich, the author of *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl*, are in agreement on the essential facts: that in telling her own story Leni Riefenstahl paid no heed to the essential facts, which implicated her as a Hitler devotee and an anti-Semite well aware of the monstrosities of the Reich. Yet ideological purity was not her driving force. She turned out propaganda without compunction because serving the Nazi regime was her main chance. Fame, money, and power enticed her into accepting the devil's bargain;

there was nothing in her scantily furnished soul to make her resist.

LENI RIEFENSTAHL WAS BORN IN A WORKING class district of Berlin in 1902. Her father, Alfred, was a plumbing salesman and a household despot with an imaginary spiked helmet. Her mother, Bertha, prayed while pregnant for a beautiful daughter who would become a famous actress. Leni was one of those uncanny creatures made for stage and screen. At 16 she auditioned for a part as a bare-breasted hoochie-coochie girl in a piece of movie trash called *Opium*; her failure only spurred her longings. Dancing would be her chosen route to glory, though she had to take lessons behind her father's back; when Alfred found out she was dancing in public, he shipped her off to boarding school. "How I wish I were a man," Leni confided in a letter to a friend, "it would be so much easier to carry out all my plans."

Her plans for independence, featuring dancing and men, proceeded nicely when she returned to Berlin. Beginning a storied career as *femme fatale*, she turned a malleable Jewish youth into what Bach calls "something of a love slave," demeaning him until he slashed his wrists, at which point she forced the bleeding boy to crawl under the sofa so her father wouldn't see him.

He did time in a mental hospital, emigrated to America, and went blind. Informed years later of his misfortunes, Leni seized upon the salient detail: "he never forgot me as long as he lived."

Sadly, one cannot choose which loves to remember and which to forget: Leni's deflowering at 21, by a caddish tennis star pushing 40, was calculated on her part and brutal on his; afterward, he flung an American twenty-dollar bill her way, in case she needed an abortion. She responded to the humiliation by getting engaged to him, though she had the sense not to marry him in the end. This obsessive bondage to an unworthy man warned her off love and taught her to use men for what she could get. These were not perhaps the wisest lessons she could have drawn from the experience.

A subsequent lover and a decent man, the hotshot Jewish banker Harry Sokal, wanted to marry her, but she preferred that he bankroll and promote her solo dance debut. Her career took off in a hurry, abetted by his management behind the scenes, which Leni resented as the meddling of a casual sexual partner she'd had enough of. She later claimed to have loved dancing more than anything else she ever did, but a knee injury cut her career short after only eight months of performing.

HER RESOURCEFULNESS AND AMBITION never wavered. She got a part in the film *Ways to Strength and Beauty*, which promised "regeneration of the human race" through athletic excellence; Leni appeared stripped to the waist, after the Weimar skin-flick conception of a Greek or Roman (they weren't particular) serving-woman. Then in the subway one day, she saw a poster for the movie *Mountain of Destiny*, the latest offering in the peculiarly German genre of Alpine films, which showed mountaineers and skiers exhibiting their prowess and refining their Teutonic souls on the snowy heights. Leni knew this was for her, and she sought out the film's director, Dr. Arnold Fanck. He pronounced her "the most beautiful woman in Europe" and declared he would make her "the most famous woman in Germany." Innovative surgery restored her knee to working order, and Fanck wrote a screenplay in three days and presented it to her in the hospital. *The Holy Mountain* featured Leni as the dancer Diotima, with whom two climbers and best friends fall tragically in love. "What do you seek up here—in nature?" one of the doomed lovers asks Diotima. "Beauty!" she enthuses. The right-wing press shared the enthusiasm for Teutonic men and women in high places, and great politics was clearly a prime ingredient in the witches' brew. As one critic wrote, "THIS WAY, GERMAN FILM, TO THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF YOUR REBIRTH AND THAT OF THE

GERMAN PEOPLE!" Before his first meeting with Leni, Hitler would say, "The most beautiful thing I have ever seen in a film was Riefenstahl's dance on the sea in *The Holy Mountain*."

Success built on success, and Leni became an established star of the Alpine films, making several more with Fanck before venturing on her own as screenwriter, director, and leading lady in *The Blue Light*. The film tells the story of the beautiful peasant Junta, who brings back lovely, preternaturally glowing crystals from a mountain cavern, while the young men of her village who seek the crystals fall to their deaths. The crystals astonish all who see them, but only Junta can get them until an expert mountaineer, an outsider, reaches the cavern and turns Junta's wondrous treasure into a commercial concern for the village; her world is denuded of magic, and with the light from the cavern no longer there to guide her, Junta falls and is killed. As an actress, Leni is one of the most physically daring women ever to appear on screen, climbing sheer rock faces without a rope. As a director, the novice displays an instinctive sense of alpine romanticism: the mountaintops in the moonlight ravishingly evoke a woman's gleaming breasts. But the critics of the liberal Berlin newspapers rightly found the movie so much hokum, and Leni reacted after the manner of her place and time: she blamed the Jews—overlooking the fact that her co-producer and co-writer were both Jewish. In November 1932 the Jewish psychologist and aesthete Rudolf Arnheim interviewed her on the radio, and she told him, "As long as the Jews are film critics, I'll never have a success. But watch out, when Hitler takes the rudder everything will change."

She had met Hitler earlier that year. A mass rally at the Berlin Sportpalast, where Hitler had spoken, electrified her:

I had an almost apocalyptic vision that I was never able to forget. It seemed as if the earth's surface were spreading out in front of me, like a hemisphere that suddenly splits apart in the middle, spewing out an enormous jet of water, so powerful that it touched the sky and shook the earth. I felt quite paralysed.

This psychic orgasm moved her to write Hitler a fan letter, and he responded by inviting her to drop by. It turned out Hitler was a fan of hers, and as they promenaded on a North Sea beach the talk turned to her movies, all of which he had seen. "Once we come to power, you must make my films," he insisted. She demurred, protesting her need to follow her own inspiration and exercise complete creative control; moreover, if we are to believe her version of events, she deplored his "racial prejudices" and said she could

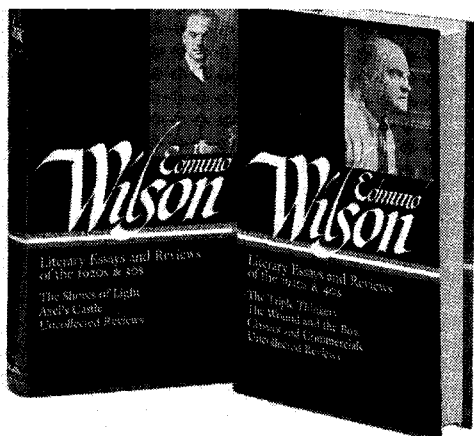
not "work for someone who makes such distinctions among people." Then came the abortive romantic clinch, followed by Hitler's hangdog reclamation of his dignity: "How can I love a woman until I have completed my task?"

Despite Leni's professed recoil from the Hitlerian touch, other observers later in their relationship, such as Putzi Hanfstaengl, the Führer's pianist and confidant, say Leni all but offered herself on a platter for Hitler's taking, and it was he who refused the sweets. (Hanfstaengl thought his master impotent and perhaps homosexual.) Leni made the most of her friendship with Hitler by leading people to believe they were sexually intimate: the cachet this gave her got her whatever she wanted for her films.

AND HER ARTISTIC INDEPENDENCE AND putative revulsion at Nazi anti-Semitism did not hold out for long against Hitler's enticements to make his films. She did turn down his offer to make a biopic about Horst Wessel, in Bach's description "the Nazi pimp whose murder in a drunken brawl had been mythologized as political martyrdom," but in short order she signed on to direct a film of the 1933 Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg. *Victory of Faith* soon found its audience. A Jewish Gymnasium student in Heilbronn recalled having to attend a screening with his schoolmates: the good Germans stood and sang patriotic songs while the Jews were required to stay seated; then they beat the Jews and urinated on them while their professors watched. Yet even such smashing successes could not disguise the film's shortcomings, in Leni's own eyes as well as others'. "Victory of Faith is technically unsure," writes Bach, "and exposes the rally as a messy, amateurish affair rather than the demonstration of precision and efficiency it was meant to be."

Precision and efficiency would come with practice. *Triumph of the Will*, Leni's film of the monumental 1934 Nazi rally at Nuremberg, has rightly been called by just about any critic who matters the greatest propaganda film ever made. Its potency stems from its command of tones that range from Wagnerian grandeur to homely innocence to breathless rapture to flaming demonolatry. The film conjures up a German Volk that is as ordinary and peaceable as any other people and that is exalted to martial sublimity by the touch of a spellbinding master. As Hitler's motorcade makes its way through the streets of Nuremberg, there is no raving exultation from the multitudes lining the route; these are the unexceptionable joyous faces of regular folks on a holiday outing or at a sporting event; a cat watching from a windowsill provides the decisive homespun touch. Similarly, when the camera turns to the soldiers preparing for the rally, the pride of the Reich tends to be made

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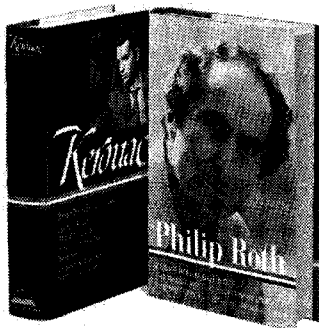
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up of unremarkable human specimens, running toward the wan and spindly; anything but fearsome in physique or demeanor, they engage in slaphappy horseplay, like the boys they are. At the rally, still younger boys strain on tiptoe to see over the crowd; there is nothing more cinematically wholesome and winning than pubescent Hitler youth. The Führer himself appears only too human at times, sympathetic, approachable. During Rudolf Hess's introductory speech, Hitler gives a hurried perfunctory salute, as though embarrassed by the attention. When the cavalry and armored cars speed on in tight formation, he obviously enjoys the whirring spectacle, like a NASCAR buff at the racetrack.

Of course, malevolence seethes just below the placid surface, and erupts under oratorical pressure. The voices of speechmakers are pitched toward frenzy, in the now familiar manner of totalitarian hypnotism. The high priests scream *Sieg Heil!* as a release into madness; the choral response is feral baying. Hitler himself is as stagy in his rants and rages as a B-movie potentate. Trimborn notes that when Charlie Chaplin saw an abbreviated version of *Triumph of the Will*, he fell about laughing, and found his inspiration for *The Great Dictator*.

It is hard to imagine a civilized people watching Leni's film with a thrill, or indeed without contempt. As the camera cuts from Hitler speaking to attentive schoolboys listening, one cannot but think him as corrupting as a child molester, and more destructive: he is readying the 14-year-olds to die for him on the Russian front, and one does not need hindsight to see it. Most of the Nazi grandees preaching heroic virility are fat-marbled slabs of prime beef, and those who are not blatantly bovine tend to the porcine or rodential or even amphibian. And as the goose-stepping millipede of SA and SS and Wehrmacht marches on and on and on, one suffers the totalitarian tedium unto death. Any irony on Leni's part is unthinkable, however. She believed the whole thing, and helped make her countrymen believe. No one can deny her that distinction.

HITLER WAS SO PLEASED WITH THE RESULT that he wanted more and more. "Who else but you could make a film of the Olympics?" he entreated her, about the 1936 Games to be held in Berlin, a prospective showpiece for Aryan strength and beauty. Goebbels's propaganda ministry financed Leni's undertaking and set up a dummy corporation, Olympia-Film GmbH, "because the Reich does not wish to be seen openly as the maker of the film," in the words of an internal memo. Leni would later protest that she understood nothing of the financial arrangements, and would eternally uphold the aesthetic purity of her film, which like

Triumph of the Will was art and not propaganda. It is true enough that *Olympia* does not celebrate the flagrantly sinister, unlike *Triumph of the Will*, and that it does celebrate strength and beauty even when they come in ideologically impure form, such as the person of the black American track star Jesse Owens. Yet one sees some of the tricks Leni picked up in making the earlier film at work here as well. German innocence undergirds German superiority. German sports fans are not political fanatics, but cheer for German victors—and German athletes dominate the Games—just like fans anywhere; after all, one also hears Finns in the stands chanting *Suomi* for their triumphant distance runners, and sees straw boaters flying in the air when Americans win. Hitler is just a big kid having the time of his life, by turns hopeful, anxious, ardent, revved-up; when the anchorwoman for the German 4x100 relay drops the baton with a big lead, he is crestfallen, totally caught up in the moment. Yet flashes of militant darkness remind us where we really are. German modern pentathletes ride horses and fire pistols in Wehrmacht officers' uniforms. Mass calisthenics outside the stadium, with thousands bending and flexing in unison, suggest less peaceable rites. The political message is subtler in *Olympia* than in *Triumph of the Will* but nevertheless unmistakable: Nazi Germany is a force, and will teach the world more about strength than about beauty. Leni, characteristically, grabbed what she could of both, enjoying the most torrid affair of her life with the American decathlon champion, Glenn Morris, who in the throes of victory tore off her blouse and kissed her breasts in front of the packed stadium.

The Nazi regime feted Leni as a national heroine, but good democrats were finding her less charming. Her trip to America in 1938 came at an inopportune time: *Kristallnacht*, which occurred shortly after her arrival, shocked the American people, and Leni unthinkingly—perhaps madly—denounced the reports of the pogrom as "slander" against Germany and "the greatest man who ever lived." The Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League and the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League for the Defense of American Democracy saw to it that *Olympia* would not be distributed in the United States.

Other nations were more generous. Mussolini called Leni to Rome, and unsuccessfully tried to persuade her to make a film about Fascist heroes draining the swamps. When German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop returned from signing the Nazi-Soviet Pact in Moscow in August 1939, he delivered a handwritten appreciation of *Olympia* from Stalin.

War brought fresh opportunities, which would contribute to Leni's postwar trials. On September 11, 1939, the Special Riefenstahl

Film Unit arrived in the largely Jewish town of Konskie, Poland. The next day Polish partisans killed and mutilated five German soldiers there, and the Nazis forced a group of Jews to dig a grave for them; at some point, the Nazis started shooting, massacred 30 or 40 Polish civilians, and set the synagogue on fire. A photograph of Leni on the spot, her face contorted with weeping, appeared after the war as evidence that, in Bach's words, "she had witnessed murders of unarmed civilians prefiguring murders that would number in the millions." Maintaining to the end of her life that "In Poland, I never saw a corpse, not of a soldier, not of a civilian," she would file the first of many suits for libel that asserted her ignorance of Nazi atrocities.

UNWELCOME CONTROVERSY HAD A way of seeking her out. From 1940 through 1943, during the shooting of her ambitious but failed feature film *Tiefland*, which called for a Spanish touch, Leni requisitioned Gypsies from the transit camps of

Maxglan and Marzahn to serve as extras in the movie—unpaid forced labor, by people whose next stop would be Auschwitz. "We saw nearly all of [the Gypsies] after the war," Leni would declare, though in fact most of them had been exterminated.

After the war, everyone expected contrition and atonement from her, but she persistently eschewed remorse or even regret for anything she had done. "I would have committed suicide had I felt that I shared the responsibility for these crimes," she said, but she was free of any misgivings on that score. At the same time, she was given to muttering about "the Jewish element" as the source of her troubles, which were many. A rash marriage to a man more promiscuous than herself collapsed, and she wound up in a mental hospital for several months. Denazification hearings cleared her of criminality, but the press and public were less forgiving. Breakneck litigiousness became her defense against the numerous attacks on her reputation.

Somehow she rode out the storm. In 1962 she joined an expedition to the Sudan that changed

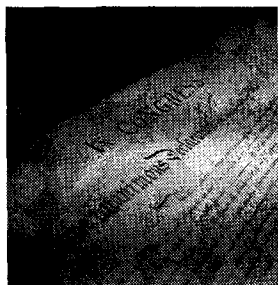
her life; she would return several times, and the photographs she took of the primitive Nuba tribesmen over the next 15 years had people talking of her excellence once again. In 1968 she took up with a man 42 years younger than she, and they remained together the rest of her life. She became the oldest certified scuba diver in the world, practicing the sport well into her 90s, and a brilliant underwater photographer. When she died in 2003 at the age of 101, the public's response equivocated between praise for her genius and condemnation of her Nazi past. But anyone who reads Trimborn's and Bach's fascinating biographies (Bach's is the one to read if you're reading only one) and watches *Triumph of the Will* can have no doubt: Leni Riefenstahl was the cut-rate female version of Doctor Faustus come to life, pliable, malignant, and foolish, who gave evil a beautiful face and claimed innocent beauty was all she lived for.

Algis Valiunas is a literary journalist and the author of Churchill's Military Histories (Rowman & Littlefield).

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Book Review by Joseph Tartakovsky

MOTHER TONGUE

Inventing English: A Portable History of the Language, by Seth Lerer.
Columbia University Press, 305 pages, \$24.95



SETH LERER'S *INVENTING ENGLISH* IS an engaging but ultimately frustrating history of the English language, told in short, chronological chapters with themes like ancient origins, spelling change, and modern African-American dialect. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dr. Johnson, and Twain get a chapter each. Milton, Locke, Noah Webster, and H.L. Mencken receive less though still considerable attention, along with works like *Beowulf*, *Middlemarch*, and the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The book is not so much literary history, however, as a curious parade of philology: grammar, syntax, phonetics, phonology, morphology, dialectology, phraseology, orthoepy (more in a moment), orthography, and etymology. Yet Lerer, the Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University, means to address the unprofessional lover of English with the argument that the 1,400-year-old language has been in constant change, endlessly "invented."

The story of English begins in the mid-5th century C.E., when Germanic peoples from Northern Europe, mostly of the Angle and Saxon tribes, flood into the British Isles. A century later Old English emerges as a branch of the Germanic language family, which includes Dutch and Danish. Indulge during Oktoberfest and you can slurringly demonstrate the kinship: *What is that?* *Was is das?* (German) *Wat is dat?* (Dutch) *Hvad er det?* (Danish). Old English, incomprehensible today to non-scholars,

was the isle's vernacular between roughly 500 and 1100. Its earliest record is poetry, often songs about grim predawn battles in clinging mist, sung, like Homer's epics in their day, with harps at banquets. English's oldest poem, nine lines about Creation, was written by Caedmon, a 7th-century Northumbrian cowherd who claimed angelic inspiration. *Caedmon's Hymn* opens: "Nu scylum hergan hefaenricase Uard, Metudaes maecti end his modgidanc." "Now we shall praise heaven-kingdom's Guardian, the Creator's might, and his mind-thought." When a sound in Old English was irreproducible by Latin letters, Anglo-Saxon scribes borrowed Germanic runes like the thorn, þ, representing the *th* consonant or "interdental" (notice where your tongue goes when you produce it), probably the most difficult English sound for non-native speakers to pronounce.

In 1066 the Normans invaded. During their four centuries of dominion, Old French was the language of law, administration, and courtly culture. The Normans brought to Britain's shepherds and farmers such terms as *art*, *cuisine*, *fashion*, and *literature*. One can still detect the Francophone influence in word endings like *-ous* (*courteous*, *judicious*) or *-ment* (*government*, *commandment*). Phrases like "give offence," "have mercy," "take pains" were French idioms. Old English borrowings from Old French often reflected more than plain meaning. Sir Walter Scott showed how words reveal that the Anglo-Saxon raised the food and the Norman French-

man ate it: compare *sow*, *cow*, *calf*, *sheep*, *deer* (Old English) to *pork*, *beef*, *veal*, *mutton*, *venison* (Old French). The first record of English being spoken in Parliament (a French word) is in 1362, the year the body passed a law requiring legal courts to proceed in English because litigants no longer understood French. Indeed, many Old English speakers couldn't understand each other. An Oxford scholar named John of Trevisa wrote in the 1380s that northern English was so "sharp" and "unshapely" that "we Southern men may scarcely understand it."

BY THE MID-13TH CENTURY OLD ENGLISH had become Middle English and the language's great trend was clear. "The history of the language," writes Lerer, is "a story of a shift from an inflected to an uninflected language." Old English, for instance, had grammatical gender, like Spanish or French, but within a hundred years of the Norman Conquest all inanimate nouns became, simply, "it." Old English had grammatical cases, like Latin or Russian, but these were abandoned. Old English nouns became plural by changing roots, remnants of which survive in very old words like *mouse*, *mice* or *foot*, *feet*; now we add an *-s*. Old English verbs changed roots in the past tense, a form fossilized in verbs like *I drink*, *I drank*; *I think*, *I thought*, but most old root changes vanished; today we just add the suffix *-ed* ("climbed" for *clum*, "helped" for *holp*). In short, our language simplified tremendously.

In the 14th century the urbane Geoffrey Chaucer, called the father of English poetry within decades of his death, established the poet (says Lerer) as an “innovator in the uses of language”—in a passage of seven lines in *Troilus and Cryseyde*, he introduced eight words to English (among them *adorn*, *cause*, *repair*). Middle English was changing so rapidly that William Caxton (1422-1491), Britain’s first printer, could observe, “Certaynly our langage now vsed varyeth ferre [far] from that whiche was vsed and spoken whan I was borne.”

Between the mid-15th and -16th centuries a systematic shift in pronunciation occurred, marking the transition from Middle to early modern English. The letters *ea* came to be pronounced *ee*—thus *meat*, pronounced *mate*, came to sound like *meet*. (Five curious exceptions retain the old pronunciation: *great*, *break*, *steak*, *yea*, and *Reagan*.) Lerer devotes many pages to orthoepy, the study of pronunciation, which seeks to explain (often in vain) why *two* is pronounced like *too*, but *put* unlike *cut*; why we drop the *h* in *honest* but not in *humble*; or why consonants alter vowels, as in *arm* vs. *warm* or *and* vs. *wand*. Spelling, Lerer tells us, generally preserves historical pronunciations. Chaucer pronounced *knight*, “knight.”

IN THE LATE 16TH AND EARLY 17TH CENTURIES, the “cusp of linguistic modernity,” new words from science, commerce, exploration, literature, art—drawn from Latin, Greek, European and non-European languages—swelled the lexicon as never before or since. Shakespeare contributed nearly 6,000 of them, an exhibition of genius unmatched by any author in any language. Writers began to notice that English is the most voracious of tongues. In his 1658 dictionary Edward Philips observed, “There are not many nations in Europe, some of whose words we have not made bold with.” We took *mustache* from French, *cannibal* from Spanish, *smuggler* from Dutch, *chintzy* from India, *raccoon* from Indian North America, and *barbecue* from the West Indies. Old English drew 3% of its vocabu-

lary from foreign sources; the figure in modern English rises to nearly 70%. Words died, too. *Eximious* was once a living synonym of “excellent” and *temulent* a synonym of “drunk,” which gives us hope that “dis” will one day breathe its last and leave the innocent “insult” to do its work. The reason for a loanword or coinage’s survival is elusive, explains Lerer, but words usually enter the language through the pens of the best writers and attain acceptance through common usage. According to Alexander Gil (1564-1635), a linguist who taught the young Milton, “In morals the agreement of good men, and in language the practice of the learned, is the determining rule.”

Unfortunately the learned sometimes let us down, as does Lerer in some small and not so small ways. His prose is flat. He uses redundancies like “uniquely personal” and “imaginative fiction.” He re-uses quotes again and again, sometimes on the same page, sometimes with worrisome variation. Worse still is his pathological use of metaphor and simile. The problem is not only bad metaphors (“the swell of sounds that is the ocean of our tongue”), but his determination to liken or compare every subject in his book to something else. In one typical passage, he writes that “Words are like fashions...as much a store of styles as one’s garage, houses, cars, tools, or patio furniture.” In the next paragraph the image changes: “Like spices, sought-for overseas by travelers and traders, words can be bought and sold to saffron our tongue.” In the next paragraph a word reminds him of *Paradise Lost* and he wonders, “Are words like some satanic stowaways in English Eden?” In the same paragraph new words are compared to “immigrants” struggling for “citizenship in the lexicon.” In the next paragraph the word “hybrid” calls to his mind an image of words as cross-breeding flowers.

LERER’S COMPARISON OF EVERYTHING TO everything is the consequence of a relativism that mistakes variety for equality. In the face of endless change, he argues, there cannot be something called proper English. “All of us find or invent our language,” he writes. “We

may come up with new sentences never heard before. We may use words in a unique way.... The angel that comes to Caedmon comes to all of us.” By the book’s end we are in the midst of a wild celebration of linguistic diversity. Like an optimist at Babel, Lerer is charmed by the newest slang or the latest mode of poetry that “challenges the conventions of form and rhetoric.” Misspelled, uncapitalized, unpunctuated emails reflect for him the “legacy of American poetics” and a “carefully framed indifference to the rigors of epistolarity.” Gangster rap and hip-hop “give us soliloquies as rich as ‘to be or not to be.’”

This promiscuous conclusion is a shame, for it contradicts the rest of his book. Lerer honors the poets to whose genius and labor the English language is permanently indebted. Chaucer and Shakespeare mocked the pedantries of courtiers and scholars as well as the malapropisms of rustics. Lerer shows how grammarians discovered rules, orthographers fixed spellings, lexicographers settled meaning. He praises the linguist John Hart, who argued in his *Orthographie* (1569) for “learned” English, “that speech which euery reasonable English man, will the nearest he can, frame his tongue thereunto.” He glows in describing how Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) “shaped the English of its time and for a century afterward.” According to Lerer, nothing did more to distinguish polite discourse from slang and colloquialism than Johnson’s *Dictionary*. Johnson said it was intended for readers who would “aspire to exactness of criticism or elegance of style,” and expressed the hope that through it the language’s “purity may be preserved.”

“We should not see our language as debased,” Lerer closes, for “the history of English is a history of invention.” One could accept this plea if only he distinguished invention that illuminates and ennobles from that which degrades and obscures.

Joseph Tartakovsky is an associate editor of the Claremont Review of Books.



Book Review by Cheryl Miller

THE GENIUS OF OLD NEW YORK

Edith Wharton, by Hermione Lee.
Alfred A. Knopf, 880 pages, \$35

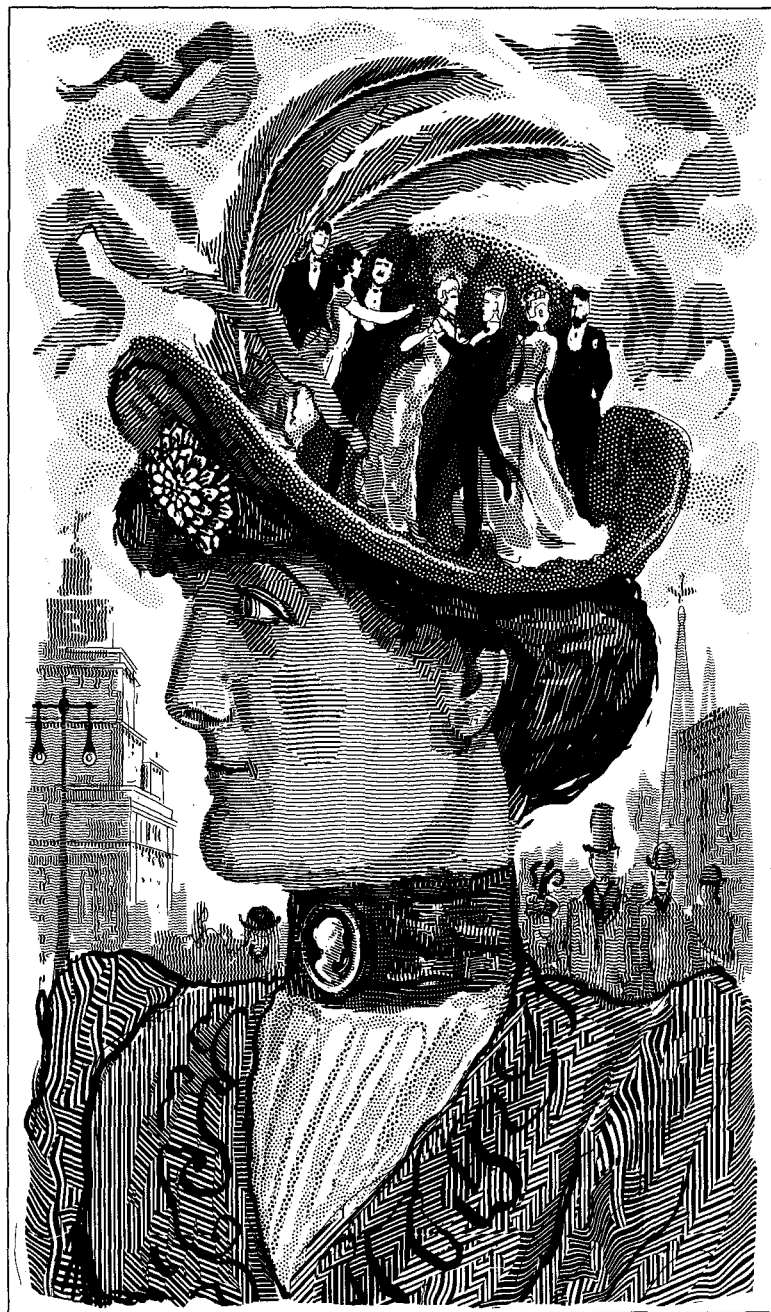


Illustration by Elliott Bartfield from *Bibliotopia* by Steven Gilbrar; reprinted by permission of David R. Godine, Publisher.

EDITH WHARTON, THE MASSIVE NEW biography by Oxford English professor Hermione Lee, is the story of success: how Lee's formidable heroine survived a painful childhood, a disastrous marriage, an only slightly less disastrous love affair, repeated bouts of depression and illness, and the German occupation. Through it all, Wharton remained unflappable. Just two months before her death, she paid a visit to a friend and collaborator, the architect Ogden Codman, to discuss a new edition of their *The Decoration of Houses* (one of Wharton's 48 books). "Everyone was on jump all the time," Codman complained of his frail but nevertheless commanding guest. Only

a few days after she arrived, Wharton suffered a heart attack. As she was carried into the ambulance, she admonished her host: "This will teach you not to ask decrepit old ladies to stay."

Wharton's life was a constant flurry of activity. Between 1897 and 1937, she published at least one book a year, including novels, volumes of short stories, memoirs, travel writing, and guides to gardening and interior decoration. She renovated three houses and the accompanying grounds; and she built one from the ground up: The Mount, her stately residence in Lenox, Massachusetts (which was recently restored and opened to the public). She traveled all about the Continent and North Africa. When

World War I broke out, she became a tireless war-worker on behalf of her adopted country, France, lobbying for the U.S. to enter the war, writing propaganda, and opening hospitals and shelters for refugees. "I'm afraid I'm an incorrigible life-lover, life-wonderer, and adventurer," she observed. Henry James, half in awe and half in terror of his unsinkable friend, dubbed her the "Angel of Devastation" and "Firebird." "A lady who consumes worlds as you & I (don't even) consume apples," he described her. "She uses up everything and everyone."

Wharton's self-assurance and *joie de vivre* were hard-won treasures. One friend joked that both Wharton and Teddy Roosevelt (whom

she much admired) were "self-made men." Born Edith Newbold Jones in 1862, Wharton called herself a "morbid, self-scrutinizing and unhappy" child with red hair and big hands and feet. The Joneses were a "patrician clan" and part of "Old New York," the close-knit, conformist society Wharton would later satirize and celebrate in her 1920 masterpiece, *The Age of Innocence*. Although a prosperous household—it was her family that gave rise to the phrase "keeping up with the Joneses"—it was not a happy one. Her mother, Lucretia, bullied Wharton's gentle father and disapproved of her peculiar daughter.

Despite her mother's fastidiousness about written and spoken English, Wharton never received a formal education. (She would always be somewhat self-conscious of her lack of schooling.) Yet "undereducated" as she was, she achieved fluency in French, Italian, and German and was always a voracious reader. Lucretia forbade her to read novels until she was married, so the obedient "Puss" devoured everything else she could find in her father's "gentleman's library"—classics, poetry, history, and philosophy. Browning was her favorite poet, but she loved Whitman too. He proved more of a challenge to procure: in the houses of her childhood, she recalled, "*Leaves of Grass* was kept under lock and key, and brought out, like tobacco, only in the absence of the ladies."

Besides reading, the young Edith loved telling stories or, as she called it, "making up." In her teens, she wrote a novel, *Fast & Loose*, as well as a collection of poems. But her literary interests were soon set aside, and her new ambition—after her fashionable mother—was "to be the best dressed woman in New York." At 23, Edith was married off to an eligible suitor, Edward ("Teddy") Wharton, and set up house-keeping in Newport.

But she did not settle down to conventional married life. Instead, she began writing, dashing off poems, short stories, and a manual on interior design. A "preponderance of intellectuality on the part of the intended bride" had put an end to Wharton's first engagement, and it would also cause a rift early in her marriage to Teddy, an agreeable man but one whose interests did not extend far beyond hunting and drink. In her diary, Wharton recalled the crucial moment when their incompatibility became clear. She was reading James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and pointed out a passage to Teddy for his opinion. He replied: "Does that sort of thing really amuse you?" "I heard the key turn in my prison lock," she wrote. "Oh, gods of derision! And you've given me over twenty years of it!"

She escaped by spending most of her time in France while Teddy remained in Massachusetts to manage affairs at The Mount, their

new home. At 43, Wharton published her first major novel, *The House of Mirth* (1905). It was a best-seller, establishing her as one of the country's foremost novelists. Her family did not welcome the news. In their milieu, novelists were as *déclassé* as tradesmen; her parents never read or even implied any awareness of her work. Teddy was slightly more supportive: "Look at that small waist," he bragged. "You'd never think she wrote a line of poetry."

In Europe, Wharton found a more appreciative (and mostly male) circle of friends, including Henry James, the art historian Bernard Berenson, the lawyer and diplomat Walter Berry, and the novelist Paul Bourget. She also met Morton Fullerton, a "bounder" who was as attractive as he was untrustworthy, and they began a doomed three-year love affair. Fullerton had a long line of famous conquests, both male and female; at the time he met Wharton, he was engaged to his adopted sister.

Meanwhile, Wharton kept writing at a frenetic pace, publishing *Ethan Frome* (1911), *The Reef* (1912), and *The Custom of the Country* (1913), among other books. Her relationship with Teddy deteriorated further as he plunged into alcoholism and began exhibiting signs of bipolar disorder. Things came to a head when Teddy confessed to keeping a mistress—and occasionally a bevy of chorus-girls—in a Boston apartment, which he maintained with money from Edith's trust fund. The Whartons divorced in 1913, and Edith settled permanently in France, where she would die in 1937.

LEE TREATS THESE ORDEALS WITH intelligence and sympathy. (It was good preparation, no doubt, for her to write a biography of another complicated female writer, Virginia Woolf, ten years ago.) Avoiding the excesses of "pathography," she declines to dwell on Wharton's various depressions and breakdowns, instead emphasizing her energy and playful spirit—a choice much more in keeping with the woman who, during the unhappiest days of her marriage, assured a friend: "You mustn't think there haven't been bits of blue sky all the same.... I can hardly ever wholly stop having a good time!"

Lee avoids irresponsible speculation in the face of an incomplete or ambiguous historical record. (Before she died, Wharton recovered and burned most of her letters.) And the biographer deals sensibly with one of her more startling revelations: the discovery of an unfinished novella, "Beatrice Palmato," a frankly pornographic fragment detailing the incestuous affair of a father and daughter. Unlike the Freudian and feminist interpreters of Wharton's life, Lee realizes that an author can write about such a thing without necessarily having lived it. She

chalks it up to a literary experiment—a variation, perhaps, on Wharton's ecstatic love poetry about Fullerton.

EDITH WHARTON, WRITES THE AUTHOR, is "the story of an American citizen in France"—a precise formulation. Although Wharton spent most of her life in France and was often critical of her native U.S., she always remained an American. Unlike James, she never changed her citizenship, and was deeply angry when he did. "A mistake... rather puerile, and altogether unlike him," she wrote of his decision. As a friend said of Wharton, "She loved Europe, England, Italy, better than any native—yet remained an American of the old fashion."

Indeed, it's curious how little France figures in Wharton's novels. Henry James was always urging her to "DO New York," but she never really "DID" anything else. Her novels focus always on Americans, and Europe serves chiefly as a foil to America, as in *The Age of Innocence*, where Paris is alternately a symbol of culture (embodied by Ellen Olenska's French secretary, who lives for "good conversation") contrasted to New York's philistinism, and a symbol of decadence contrasted to New York's decency (Ellen's brutish husband).

More often, Wharton's foreign settings provide just another glamorous backdrop for her characters' schemes and machinations, as in her proto-jet-set novels, *The House of Mirth* and the later "Jazz Age" books. These are the Americans who, Wharton complains, regard Europe "simply as affording exceptional opportunities for bathing and adultery." There are hints of the France-versus-America theme in *The Reef* and *The Custom of the Country*, but only hints. *The Reef* takes place at (the American) Anna Leath's chateau in southern France, but the setting serves chiefly as a symbol of her American characters' emotional displacement, of their alienation from one another. (James, in a letter to Wharton, wondered why all "these non-French people" had "to have their story out there.") The only other character to spend any time in France is Undine Spragg, the social-climbing divorcee of *The Custom of the Country*. With respect to that book, James (giving exasperatingly inconsistent advice) complained that the French section was too short, and wished Wharton had focused more on the comedy of manners between her binational couple. But, as Lee rightly notes, the novel's foremost concern is America: Undine's destruction of her first husband, Ralph, and with him the culture of Old New York.

New York—and thus America—was always Wharton's true subject. Lee calls her "a social anthropologist of her tribe" and a "nov-

elist-ethnographer." She was an avid reader of sociology and science. Her library featured works by Darwin, Weber, T.H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer, and Thorstein Veblen—and she used insights from their researches to understand American society. As a kind of outsider, she felt she could see more deeply into the American soul—claiming as her "symbolic watchword" Rudyard Kipling's famous line, "And what should they know of England who only England know?"

Wharton knew the truth of those words first hand: only after she had left Old New York could she see its value. As a young woman, she had chafed against her society's prejudices and conventions, its narrow-mindedness, its insistence on ignoring all things "unpleasant." But as the world of her youth faded away, she began to question the society that had formed in its wake. Writing to James, she lamented:

Everything that used to form the fabric of our daily life has been torn in shreds, trampled on, destroyed; and hundreds of little incidents, habits, traditions, which, when I began to record my past, seemed too insignificant to set down, have acquired the historical importance of fragments of dress and furniture dug up in a Babylonian tomb.

WHARTON WAS NOT RELIGIOUS, BUT she shared with the other writers she admired, like Hawthorne and James, what she called a "New England conscience," the awareness of something like original sin. This tragic sense of life gave her a profoundly conservative respect for the past. What Wharton wrote of George Eliot applies equally to herself: "She felt no call to found a new school of morals. A deep reverence for family ties, for the sanctities of tradition, the claims of slowly acquired convictions, and slowly formed precedents, is revealed in every page of her books." Wharton was distrustful of modernity with its abstractions and "theoretical visions of liberty." "Life is not a matter of abstract principles," she wrote, "but a succession of pitiful compromises with fate, of concessions to old tradition, old beliefs, old charities and frailties."

In her books, utopian schemes invariably lead to ruin. For Wharton, Lee writes, "there is no other world, no escape, no exit point to the Happy Isles." In *The House of Mirth*, Lily Bart seals all her letters with a stamp of a boat setting sail, with the word "Beyond!" below. But the "Beyond!" Lily seeks—wealth and a place in society, or freedom—always escapes her. Undine Spragg, the grasping embodiment of American capitalism (notice the initials), is always searching for something "more luxuri-

ous, more exciting, more worthy of her!" But no matter what she attains, she remains perpetually unsatisfied: "She had everything she wanted, but she still felt, at times, that there were other things she might want if she knew about them."

Nowhere is Wharton's tragic sense more evident than in *The Age of Innocence*, what she called her "simple and grave story" about "two people trying to live up to something that was still 'felt in the blood.'" It is the novel that most recalls James—in its allusions (its protagonist's name, Newland Archer, is a combination of Isabel Archer's in *The Portrait of a Lady* and Christopher Newman's in *The American*) and in its theme. When the story begins, Newland Archer is a young man in his twenties and is about to marry into one of the best families of Old New York. Then the Countess Ellen Olenska—cousin to Archer's betrothed, May Welland—returns from a disastrous marriage in Europe. The two fall deeply in love, but Ellen, unwilling to hurt her cousin, refuses to run away with Archer. Archer and May marry as planned, and Ellen returns to Paris to live alone.

Around this simple storyline Wharton fashions a complicated portrayal of Old New York. Ellen Olenska, like Wharton herself, had fled the stuffiness of Old New York for the freedom of Europe. She is New York's most perceptive critic because she can see it as Archer cannot, as an outsider. Archer tells her she has "opened his eyes," but America has opened her eyes as well. It is Ellen, not Archer, who becomes the defender of Old New York. When Archer tries to persuade Ellen to run away with him, she asks if he means her to be his mistress, since she cannot be his wife. He protests: he is "beyond" all that; he wants to find a place where they can be "simply two human beings who love each other." Ellen laughs:

Oh, my dear—where is that country?... I know so many who've tried to find it; and believe me, they all got out by mistake at wayside stations...and it wasn't at all different from the old world they'd left, but only rather smaller and dingier and more promiscuous.

Ellen, the realist, refuses to engage in fantasies. Archer claims to be "beyond" the moral categories of Old New York, but there is no place "beyond" to go. Having lived in Europe, Ellen knows the price of freedom from social convention: "happiness bought by disloyalty and cruelty and indifference." Europe is cultured and enlightened, but it is also "promiscuous" and "dingy." This new appreciation of America makes the things that were most "precious" to Ellen in her former life seem "cheap in

comparison." "I can't go back to that other way of thinking," she explains, "I can't love you unless I give you up."

Ellen has been Americanized. As the French secretary explains, for "an American...of your kind" (that is, an Old New Yorker), "things that are accepted in certain other societies, or at least put up with as part of general convenient give-and-take—become unthinkable, simply unthinkable."

Such things would not remain unthinkable for long. Indeed, polite society would soon come to regard it as tragic that Ellen Olenska and Newland Archer did not run away together. How could they defer to social mores in a world where, as one of Wharton's characters observes, "the new adultery was unfaithfulness to self"?

GIVEN HER SKEPTICISM OF MODERNITY, it's not surprising that Wharton always avoided her neighbor in France, the poet Paul Eluard, who hosted at his country home a procession of *avant-garde* artists and writers, including Tristan Tzara, Man Ray, and Marcel Duchamp. She detested modernist art, which she considered over-theorized and sensationalistic. She condemned James Joyce's *Ulysses* as "a turgid welter of schoolboy pornography," and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* as a work of pure "exhibitionism." When her novel, *The Mother's Recompense* (1925), was compared unfavorably to Mrs. Dalloway, Wharton tartly observed, "My heroine belongs to a day when scruples existed."

Wharton also disliked the new "proletarian" or democratic novel for its utopianism and its denigration of the past. Why should art focus on "persons so limited in education and opportunity that they live off from all the varied sources of culture which used to be considered the common heritage of English-speaking people?" After Upton Sinclair published *Oil!*, a call for proletarian revolution, Wharton chastised him: "I believe that a wider experience would have shown you that the evils you rightly satirize will be replaced by others more harmful to any sort of civilized living when your hero and his friends have had their way." To another friend, she expressed her doubts that all that was required for the "regeneration of the world" was "exterminating the Vanderbilts."

"There is nothing like a Revolution for making people conservative," Wharton remarked in *French Ways and Their Meaning* (1919), and that epigram would serve as the theme of her Jazz Age novels, *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922), *Twilight Sleep* (1927), and *The Children* (1928). In all three works, Wharton follows a set of emancipated moderns who find themselves "continually tripped up by obsolete sensibilities & discarded ideals."

Old New York might shy away from anything "unpleasant," but the new society is more childish and self-deceiving, believing as it does that we can "refuse ourselves to pain," that human nature can be remade to serve our purposes. The title *Twilight Sleep* refers to the drug-induced state into which women went to avoid the pains of childbirth. It serves too as a metaphor for its heroine, Pauline Manford, for whom the "avoidance of pain" is the "ultimate end." Pauline believes that to deny evil is to "prevent its coming into being," and she works endlessly to improve herself, partaking in all the latest 1920s fads: New Age spiritualism, free love, exercise regimes, psychoanalysis, self-help books, consumer science ("[s]he wanted to de-microbe life"), drugs, and eugenics (Aldous Huxley's *A Brave New World* was inspired in part by *Twilight Sleep*).

But beneath this welter of activity, Pauline remains dissatisfied. She is vaguely aware that something is lacking but doesn't know what. She experiences what Huxley described as the "contemporary tendency for superstition to be magical rather than religious—to aim at specific acts of power, such as hip-slimming, rather than at a theory of the cosmos." Romance is dead, for example; intimacy, for Pauline, "meant the tireless discussion of facts." The consummate consumer, Pauline acquires more and more, but cannot identify the end for which she strives. "They all had these colossal plans for acquiring power," Wharton writes, "and then, when it was acquired, what came of it but bigger houses, more food, more motors...and more self-righteous philanthropy?"

HER CHARACTERS CONSCIOUSLY BREAK with the past, believing themselves beyond their forebears' anachronistic social conventions. But they also cast off the understanding of human nature latent in those conventions. As a consequence, Wharton's characters face all the problems and conflicts that human beings have always experienced, but they do so blindly, ignorantly.

In *The Glimpses of the Moon*—a comedic version of *The House of Mirth*—a penniless young couple, Nick and Susy Lansing, agree to a "trial marriage" that can be broken off if one gets a "better chance" with a wealthy suitor. The experiment is a failure—jealousy, Susy's maternal

longings, and Nick's sense of honor all undo what seems, to them both, a sensible and logical arrangement. Neither Susy nor Nick can explain what went wrong. Their moral vocabulary of self-actualization and personal freedom is too impoverished to explain the "deep-seated instinctive need" that actually guides their behavior. "That was the way of the world they lived in," the narrator explains. "Nobody questioned, nobody wondered anymore—because nobody had time to remember."

Wharton had planned a sequel to *The Age of Innocence* to be called either *The Age of Wisdom* or *Homo Sapiens*. The story was to focus on Newland's thoroughly modern son, Dallas, who married "his Ellen," Fanny Beaufort, at the end of *The Age of Innocence*. Dallas and Fanny believe themselves to have "settled in advance all social, religious and moral problems," yet still come "to grief over the same old human difficulties."

It was a theme already latent in *The Age of Innocence*. In the novel's final chapter, Newland Archer, now widowed, prepares for a last trip to Paris with Dallas, who will soon be married. Dallas wants to know about Ellen Olenska, who is now living in Paris; he knows that Archer was once in love with her, and he wants to know why they separated. He then gives an astonishing source for this intelligence: on her deathbed, May had told Dallas that she knew he would always be safe with his father because when she had asked he had "given up the thing [he] most wanted."

It is the "innocent" May, the symbol of the old order, who alone understands the extent of her husband's sacrifice. By contrast, the "wise" Dallas is wholly uncomprehending; to him, the thwarted romance is "prehistoric," "a pathetic instance of vain frustration, of wasted forces." The depth of feeling possible to Archer and Ellen is alien to him; like Pauline, he and his generation are too busy with their "fads and fetishes":

The boy was not insensitive, he knew; but he had the facility and self-confidence that came of looking at fate not as a master but as an equal. "That's it: they feel equal to things—they know their way about," he mused, thinking of his son as the spokesman of the new generation

which had swept away all the old landmarks, and with them the sign-posts and the danger-signal.

Dallas, of course, is mistaken in his facility and self-confidence. We can no more be equal to fate than we can cast off the "old human difficulties." Thus the wise son Dallas is the true innocent.

The wise are really innocent; the innocent are wise—it's a reversal that keeps occurring in Wharton's novels. In *The Children* (which Lee rightly calls underrated), a band of children, led by their 15-year-old sister and surrogate mother, Judith, try to make a home together while their frivolous, pleasure-seeking parents marry, divorce, and remarry on a whim. Who are the real children, the novel asks: the youngsters who try to fulfill the duties of family, or the supposed adults who understand no obligation beyond self-fulfillment?

WHARTON'S TRAGIC SENSE, SO EVIDENT in her fiction, never caused her to despair. Despite her epicurean appetites, she retained a stoic acceptance of hardship. Her commonplace book abounds with quotations from Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Seneca. Her favorite was from Epictetus: "On the occasion of every accident that befalls you, remember to turn to yourself and inquire what power you have for turning it to use."

Wharton took a life of adversity—an unhappy childhood, a loveless marriage, an unfaithful lover—and turned it into a life rich in all her "Ruling Passions": travel, good conversation, architecture, and books. She found sanctuary first in her father's library, then in France and her many friends there, and finally in her writing. A stranger in both America and France, she made a "Country of [Her] Own" in the "Land of Letters."

"We're all imprisoned, of course—all of us middling people, who don't carry our freedom in our brains," a character explains in the short story "Autres Temps." Imprisonment was the fate of many of Wharton's characters, but not of Wharton. She carried her freedom in her brains, and that was the secret of her success.

Cheryl Miller is a 2007 Phillips Foundation Fellow.

MAKING IT NEW

The Curtain: An Essay in Seven Parts, by Milan Kundera,
translated by Linda Asher. HarperCollins, 176 pages, \$22.95



THE CURTAIN WAS PUBLISHED BY GAL-
limard as *Le Rideau* in April 2005.
When HarperCollins published its
English translation this January, the work had
already appeared in Spanish, German, Portu-
guese, Polish, Greek, and Croatian translations.
Its reappearances exemplify the notion of world
literature that Milan Kundera argues for in this
long essay, and that he has realized in nine nov-
els and one short story collection between 1967
(*The Joke*) and 2000 (*Ignorance*). A literary emi-
grant who in 1975 left the Czechoslovak Social-
ist Republic for Paris, he has moved success-
fully from writing in Czech to writing in French,
the language of his last three novels—although
Identity, his most recent, was first published in
Spanish! Kundera's *œuvre* includes three early
volumes of poetry, four plays, and seven previ-
ous essays, but his claim to world literary im-
mortality will rest on his novels. *The Curtain*
serves, among other things, to justify his choice
of that art form.

Like the 1986 *The Art of the Novel* (Kundera's
first work written and published in French), *The
Curtain* is divided into seven parts; also like the
earlier work, it "intend[s] no theoretical state-
ment at all," though it does sport a more con-
tinuous argument. Indeed, *The Curtain's* power
and charm spring from the author's identity as
a writer and reader of novels. Kundera has little
favorable to say about professional or academic
literary criticism or critics, and any gestures
in that direction are ironic: the subsection,
titled "Theory of the Novel" is two pages long
and simply sums up Henry Fielding's author's
reflections in *Tom Jones*. And Kundera's con-

cluding celebration of the "miracle" of Europe's
development of the arts since the Renaissance
is undercut by the book's final two sentences:
"For the history of art is perishable. The babble
of art is eternal."

Taken as a whole, the seven "parts" of
Kundera's essay move circuitously from the
beginnings of the novel to its present and future
prospects. *The Curtain* traces the novel's origins
to the work of Rabelais and Cervantes, whose
works predate the use of the term in English
by almost two hundred years. Even Fielding,
one of the novel's fathers, saw himself in 1749
as "the founder of a new province of writing,"
as yet unnamed, to which he attached the label
"prosaic-comic writing." In conventional
literary criticism, the "newness" of the novel
is linked to formal and social changes (from
poetic to prose fictional narratives, from
aristocratic/courtly characters and audiences
to middle-class/popular ones), but Kundera
defines innovation in more fundamental terms.
Drawing on Fielding's proposition that the
novel's "new province" is the investigation of
"Human Nature," and Laurence Sterne's "radical
and total dethroning of 'story'" and focus on
seemingly insignificant topics in *Tristram Shandy*
(1759), Kundera claims that "in the art of the
novel, existential discoveries are inseparable
from the transformation of form." This
emphasis on new understandings of the human
creature through new representations guides
his pithy, illuminating account of the novel's
development: from a focus on plot and story,
to an emphasis on psychological plausibility
and material circumstantiality (from Balzac

and Flaubert through Joyce and Proust), to the
surrealist-existentialist-metafictional works of
such writers as Kafka, García Márquez, and
Kundera himself. Whatever the era, however,
Kundera's definition of the novel as "great
antilyrical poetry" applies to the work of every
author he covers, from Rabelais to Salman
Rushdie.

KUNDERA REPRESENTS SUCH INNOVA-
tions in understanding and artistic rep-
resentation through the metaphor of
tearing through the curtain of pre-interpretation
that determines our view of the world, whether
we are "conformists" or "rebels," whether the
world is being interpreted through our own eyes
or through the representations of lesser artists,
or whether we may call such pre-interpretation
ideology, common sense, the way things are,
what is right, or the best-seller list. In Kundera's
account of the novel, the great innovators are
Rabelais and especially Cervantes, who "sent
Don Quixote journeying and tore through the
curtain. The world opened before the knight er-
rant in all the comical nakedness of its prose,"
and Cervantes's "destructive art echoes and ex-
tends to every novel worthy of the name; it is the
identifying sign of the art of the novel."

Kundera's history is therefore not progres-
sive: "The novelist's ambition is not to do some-
thing better than his predecessors but to see
what they did not see, say what they did not
say. Flaubert's poetics does not devalue Balzac's,
any more than the discovery of the North Pole
renders obsolete the discovery of America."
Don Quixote tore through the curtain, but so

did novels like *The Internal-Combustion Monster*, a forgotten work by the Czech novelist Jaromir John, who in 1932 provided a comic, surrealist forecast of human life disrupted and determined by the automobile. Nor is Kundera's history timeless or universal: what he calls "the shame of repeating oneself" would prevent a 21st-century writer from mimicking Hemingway, let alone Fielding, and would prevent readers from accepting such fiction as anything other than parody or plagiarism. Nor is Kundera's history comprehensive. Mediocre novels—most novels—have no place here because they have not fulfilled the criteria for innovative illumination of human nature.

FOR KUNDERA, THE HISTORY OF THE novel—like the history of all arts—is a history of "values," constituted over time and subject to reappraisal over time. Rabelais and Cervantes could only be recognized as the founders of this art once readers and writers of novels had come to realize what constitutes its distinctive "aesthetic value—that is to say: the previously unseen aspects of existence that [a] particular novel has managed to make clear; the novelty of form it has found." As a result,

in the collective consciousness, the history of the novel over its whole span from Rabelais to our own time is thus in constant transformation, shaped by competence and incompetence, intelligence and stupidity, and above all, forgetting, which never stops enlarging its enormous cemetery where, alongside nonvalues, lie buried values that have been underestimated, unrecognized, or forgotten.

Finally, "[t]he novelist is not a valet to historians"—novels cut through the curtain of what has been reified as History in order to understand how human beings subject themselves to its conditions. But this understanding, whether in the novel or in other arts, is ultimately more valuable and enduring:

Art is not a village band marching dutifully along at History's heels. It is there to create its own history. What will ultimately remain of Europe is not its repetitive history, which in itself represents no value. The one thing that has some chance of enduring is the history of its arts.

About midway through the essay, Kundera identifies *The Curtain* as a "personal history of the novel." The quotation marks point to the subjectivity of his account but also to its authoritativeness—who better to interpret and evaluate novels than a novelist, after all? Indeed,

insofar as it persuades readers of its aesthetic judgments through literary interpretation and analysis, *The Curtain* is masterly. As a reader and critic of great fiction, Kundera is lucid, elegant, engaging, and convincing—whether he is pointing out how Flaubert's 1879 revision of *Sentimental Education* marked an evolution from scene-centered, overly dramatized realism toward the beauty of "everyday banality"; analyzing how Tolstoy managed to represent so superbly the "prose of a suicide" near the end of *Anna Karenina*; showing how Kafka transmuted the romanticism of Adalbert Stifter's *Indian Summer* (1857) into the world of *The Castle*, "defiled" comprehensively and irrevocably by bureaucratization; or arguing why in his short story "Sheep" (1958), Kenzaburo Oe refrains from identifying as Americans the drunken, brutish foreign soldiers who force the Japanese passengers on a bus into self-humiliation: "Just forgoing that one adjective was enough for the political aspect to recede into dim shadow, and for the light to focus on the enigma that most interested the writer, the existential enigma."

Many of the chapters of *Immortality*, Kundera's last novel written in Czech, involve dialogues of mutual admiration between Goethe and Hemingway, who encounter each other wherever it is that great writers end up (at least in the works of other writers). Kundera notes that the "honesty" of any great novelist (i.e., any real novelist) "is bound to the vile stake of his megalomania," because "[e]very novel created with real passion aspires quite naturally to a lasting aesthetic value, meaning to a value capable of surviving its author." Near the end of *The Curtain*, Kundera refers to the inexhaustible influence of Rabelais upon later writers from Sterne to Rushdie as an instance of how novels have renewed themselves and enlightened their readers for nearly 500 years: "their common history puts them in many mutual relationships which illuminate their meaning, extend their effect, and protect them against forgetting." But forgetting, a major theme throughout Kundera's work, may also be closely linked to the anxieties of a novelist in his late 70s whose greatest work, beginning with *The Joke* and culminating in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), seems to lie behind him, and was closely connected to the stifling effects of Czech Communist ideology, the trauma of the Soviet invasion in 1968, and Kundera's subsequent flight to and residence in France. The novels written since then call attention to philosophical problems and existential concerns of the human condition in their very titles (*Immortality*, *Slowness*, *Identity*, *Ignorance*), but Kundera's three French works are his shortest, and half of the books composed in his adopted language are essay collections, including *The Curtain*.

Another anxiety in *The Curtain* is suggested

in Kundera's calling attention to Jaromir John's prophetic but unknown novel about automobiles, as well as his observation that the earliest Western prose fictions were Icelandic sagas—magnificent narratives that had no influence on the novel (some late Victorian poets were the first in English literature to rediscover them, and Tolkien was the first to borrow from them in prose narratives). After all, Czech and Icelandic have never been, nor ever will be, read by a large number of readers, let alone novelists—and inadequate English translations of Witold Gombrowicz (a novelist much admired by Kundera) have distorted or delayed his reception in America. Kundera's decision to write in French rather than Czech may reflect an anxiety about being forgotten himself. Moreover, his painstaking revision between 1985 and 1987 (and thereafter) of all the French translations of his novels testifies to his concerns about the novelist's right to control the form of his immortality. In fact, according to the Author's Note to the 1995 English translation of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, "the French translations have become, so to speak, more faithful to the Czech originals than the originals themselves," so Kundera had Aaron Asher use the newer but more authentic French version of the novel as his source text.

KUNDERA'S CURIOUS RE-AUTHORIZATION of himself illustrates an important claim in *The Curtain* that makes possible the novelist's privilege—and obligation—to write for all readers, regardless of History, nation, or language: novels written in any language can be read, understood, and judged by readers ignorant of that language. Kundera supports his argument by striking instances from literary history: not only was Rabelais better understood by Bakhtin than by the Russian's French contemporaries, but Dostoyevsky was best understood by Gide, who knew no Russian, and Dos Passos by Sartre, who did not read him in English. Kundera's claim gives the novelist an unrivaled opportunity to write in the largest context possible—world literature. Kundera endorses Argentinian novelist Ernesto Sabato's comment on the novel's audience: "in the modern world, abandoned by philosophy and splintered by hundreds of scientific specialties, the novel remains to us as the last observatory from which we can embrace human life as a whole." Whether the numerous translations of his own novels point to Kundera's literary immortalization must be left to novelists and novel readers yet to come. For the moment, however, *The Curtain* provides an elegant and compelling brief for the novel, past, present, and future.

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Book Review by David L. Tubbs

FROM UNDER THE RUBBLE

The Solzhenitsyn Reader: New and Essential Writings, 1947–2005, by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn,
edited by Edward E. Ericson, Jr., and Daniel J. Mahoney. ISI Books, 634 pages, \$30



Александр
Солженицын

IN NOVEMBER 2006 A PUBLISHING HOUSE IN Moscow issued the first three volumes of the collected works of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. The remaining volumes will be released through 2010, and the 30-volume set will be the first full collection of Solzhenitsyn's works to be published and sold in Russia.

The Solzhenitsyn Reader is a noteworthy publishing event in its own right. The need for such an anthology in English has been apparent for some time, and not only to acquaint a new generation with his works. The range of his writing is wide, and over the years various shorter pieces—essays, speeches, and the prose poems he calls “miniatures”—have been hard to obtain, even for the resourceful.

The anthology was worth the wait. A labor of love for editors Edward Ericson and Daniel Mahoney, this project also involved some of Solzhenitsyn's best translators, including his sons Yermolai, Ignat, and Stepan. As both an

introduction to Solzhenitsyn and a collection of some of his best writing, the book will be a splendid resource for many years.

As one would expect, the *Reader* includes selections from the author's principal literary works, *The First Circle*, *Cancer Ward*, *The Gulag Archipelago*, and *The Red Wheel*. But there is one surprise—without comment, the editors have left out *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, the brilliant 1962 novella that launched Solzhenitsyn's career. Given the brevity of *Ivan Denisovich* and its special status among works written under Communism, perhaps the editors decided that an abridgement would be inappropriate.

In the main, the selections Ericson and Mahoney have chosen are engrossing. Those familiar with the author's *oeuvre* might question a few of their choices—I would have liked to see several more chapters from *The Gulag Archipelago*—but the editors cannot be accused of unreasonable bias.

The *Reader* contains some of Solzhenitsyn's best poems, short stories, speeches, and essays. To have these in one place is a delight. The highlights include the short story “Matryona's Home”; excerpts from *The Trail*, an autobiographical poem exceeding 7,000 lines; the Nobel Lecture, published in 1972; and Solzhenitsyn's 1978 Harvard University commencement address. The *Reader* also has excerpts from the first volume of Solzhenitsyn's memoirs (*The Oak and the Calf*) and his historical study of Russian-Jewish relations in his homeland (*Two Hundred Years Together*).

THE EDITORS' GOOD JUDGMENT DERIVES from their extensive knowledge of Solzhenitsyn, which probably matches that of any American scholar or journalist alive today. Ericson has published two books on Solzhenitsyn's thought; Mahoney one. In their introductory essay to the *Reader* and in the com-

mentaries preceding each selection, the editors touch on aspects of Solzhenitsyn's life and career as a writer.

We learn, for instance, about the effect of the Soviet censors on Solzhenitsyn's books. After the critical success of *Ivan Denisovich* in both the USSR and abroad, Solzhenitsyn tried to have *The First Circle* published. Soviet authorities refused. Solzhenitsyn sought a compromise and offered a less controversial version of the novel with nine chapters cut. This initiative failed, though the shorter version was translated into English. Thus since 1968 the novel in its original form has been unavailable to English-language readers. This situation was at last rectified in 2005, with the completion of a new translation of *The First Circle* (excerpts of which appear in the *Reader*) by the distinguished British scholar H.T. Willetts.

Elsewhere, the editors help to clear away the falsehoods about Solzhenitsyn, most of which concern his political views. It is fair to say that Solzhenitsyn has misgivings about the theory and practice of Western democracy; but the idea that he is a theocrat or an authoritarian is simply untenable, as the editors patiently and convincingly explain.

Some might argue that Solzhenitsyn himself is partly responsible for the misinterpretation of his views. In an interview with David Remnick in 1994, he conceded that he speaks and writes with a forcefulness that is unusual in the contemporary West. Solzhenitsyn's directness can be sharp, and his sharpness may have given rise to some confusion. But in an atmosphere of moral flaccidity, his directness is attractive, and necessary.

In the United States, controversies and misconceptions about the man date back to the mid-1970s. After being expelled from the Soviet Union, he settled in Zurich and later moved with his family to Vermont. In a series of political speeches and essays, he criticized the Soviet leaders and their oppressive policies, but also extended his criticism to the West and its leadership (or lack thereof).

ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT A SYSTEMATIC political thinker—and the editors ask that we not judge his life and literary works by political criteria—some of Solzhenitsyn's ideas are highly relevant to current debates in political theory. In his Harvard commencement address, for example, he described the “le-

galistic life” of the contemporary West:

If one is right from a legal point of view, nothing more is required, nobody may mention that one could still not be entirely right, and urge self-restraint or a renunciation of these rights, call for sacrifice and selfless risk: This would simply sound absurd. Voluntary self-restraint is almost unheard of: Everybody strives toward further expansion to the extreme limit of the legal frames.

This is hyperbole, but it is effective hyperbole. It brings into focus a central theme of the address: what political theorist William Galston has called “the vast terrain between rights and rightness.” Solzhenitsyn holds that moral judgments cannot be reduced to questions of legality, that something legally permissible is not necessarily morally permissible. With few exceptions, this point eludes contemporary liberals, who seem to think that when something is decriminalized (pornography, for example), society should adopt a “nonjudgmental” attitude towards it. Solzhenitsyn's position is closer to the classical liberal view. His argument echoes the age-old distinction between liberty and license, which finds expression in the writings of John Locke, T.H. Green, and John Stuart Mill. The editors remind us that “the defense of human liberty and dignity is not exhausted by the categories or assumptions of late modernity.”

Solzhenitsyn's talk of “self-restraint” and a “renunciation of rights” hardly proves that he is a reactionary. Rather, as the editors argue, he challenges the West to “explore prudently the necessarily difficult relations between order and liberty, tradition and progress.” In doing so, the West can draw from its Christian heritage, which honors the virtues of mercy and self-sacrifice as moral antidotes to human greed and selfishness.

DESPITE ALL THAT SOLZHENITSYN has seen and endured, including the problems that now beset Russia, the editors describe him as “an optimist” and note that he describes himself the same way. Part of that optimism is his hope that the West will recover its religious heritage and recognize the folly of having “forgotten God” in the 20th century.

Since returning to Russia in 1994, however,

he seems to have become more worried about the moral future of the West and of America in particular. In April 1999 Solzhenitsyn castigated NATO for bombing Serbia. He said that no one “should hold on to illusions that this bloc aims to defend the Kosovars.” He added, “The aggressors have tossed the U.N. aside and begun a new era when the strong bear down and dictate their will.”

In a 2001 interview with David Remnick, Solzhenitsyn characterized the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe as the betrayal of a promise made by President George H.W. Bush to Mikhail Gorbachev, who had agreed to withdraw Soviet troops from the Eastern Bloc on the condition that NATO be prevented from expanding eastward. After Poland and Hungary joined NATO, Solzhenitsyn remarked that Russians “began to understand the arrogance, the real policies, of the Western powers.” Five years later, Solzhenitsyn said that “there is no substantial difference between NATO and U.S. actions,” and that Russia's joining NATO “would result not in the expansion but the decline of Christian civilization.”

Because American conservatives have been one of Solzhenitsyn's loyal constituencies, I wish the editors had more forthrightly discussed criticisms like these. In their introduction to the *Reader*, there is a cryptic reference to the problems with imposing democracy by force, but the relevant issues are left unexplored. To be sure, I do not think agreement with all of Solzhenitsyn's criticisms is necessary in order to be grateful for his voice. The editors are right to maintain that he is a “true friend of human liberty.”

The selections in *The Solzhenitsyn Reader* confirm what the editors suggest in the opening pages: the author's life almost defies belief. Born in Russia one year after the Bolshevik seizure of power, he outlived the political system that persecuted him, surviving its horrible network of labor camps while documenting its myriad crimes. Solzhenitsyn's writings are indispensable for understanding the 20th century. For those who would like to sample that corpus generously, the *Reader* is an excellent place to begin.

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BOOKS IN BRIEF

Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy, by Colin Dueck. Princeton University Press, 236 pages, \$29.95

Colin Dueck's *Reluctant Crusaders* is a well-researched, cogently argued explanation of how America's internal political characteristics have shaped its strategy toward the world.

A professor of international affairs at George Mason University, Dueck focuses on the persistence of what he calls American "strategic culture," as defined by two key attributes: classical liberalism and the desire to maintain limited liability. The first "assumes that progress in international affairs is possible," and that the more democracy in the world, the greater the likelihood of peace. Thus the promotion of a liberal international order has always been a tenet of U.S. grand strategy.

But this goal has conflicted with the American tradition of limited liability, or "avoiding costs and commitments in the pursuit of grand strategy." The "tug of war" between these principles has often led to unanticipated results. After World War I, for instance, Woodrow Wilson's attempt to establish a liberal international order through the League of Nations was stymied by the American disposition to avoid major international commitments. Given this stalemate, the U.S. adopted, by default, a strategy of disengagement from European affairs. Similarly during the Cold War, when proponents of "rolling back" the Soviet Union clashed with neo-isolationists who preferred a "fortress America," the result was containment, the only strategy that promoted the ends of classical liberalism at the right costs.

Dueck writes that 9/11 "shocked" the United States into adjusting its post-Cold War strategy. The Bush Administration adopted aggressive democracy promotion, embracing a "kind of muscular, assertive Wilsonianism." At the same time, the principle of limited liability explained Bush's unwillingness to commit more troops to the invasion of Iraq. Here, however, Dueck neglects alternative explanations, like America's penchant for technological solutions to military challenges, or its preference for "decisive battles." Besides, in Iraq and Afghanistan the American aversion to extensive entanglements may well prove advantageous to the broader global counterinsurgency strategy of our war on terror, and not, as Dueck suggests, become a hindrance to it.

Reluctant Crusaders is a welcome starting point for understanding how America's history and beliefs have enforced a surprising continuity in U.S. foreign policy, even as international threats and conditions have changed dramatically.

—Todd R. Lowery
Alexandria, VA

studying government reform. Even if you zap every scrap of waste, fraud, abuse, and unconstitutional activity, government will still be large. The bureaucracy ought to be effective, doing the right things in the right way.

—John J. Pitney, Jr.
Claremont McKenna College

The End of Government...As We Know It: Making Public Policy Work, by Elaine C. Kamarck. Lynne Rienner, 157 pages, \$19.95

Elaine Kamarck is a Kennedy School lecturer who worked for Bill Clinton and Al Gore. In this concise and useful analysis of government reform, she discusses three alternatives to old-style bureaucracy.

The first is "reinvented government," which judges programs by how well they perform instead of how much they spend. This seemingly commonsensical notion marked a true innovation in the 1980s and 1990s. In New York City, Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Police Commissioner William Bratton used daily statistics to hold precinct captains accountable for crime trends. The result was a stunning plunge in crime. While less dramatic, other such initiatives have improved service delivery at all levels of government.

The second is "government by network," in which a bureaucracy funds other organizations to carry out its tasks. These organizations—public, private, or nonprofit—will compete and learn from one another. Kamarck points to "welfare-to-work" programs as a success story. But she also cautions that accountability can be a problem with contractors, as we have seen in Iraq.

The third is "government by market," which creates a market that serves a public end. Kamarck cites the case of child care. Rather than create government day-care centers or contract with a few centers, welfare reformers gave vouchers to low-income parents. The outcome was greater choice, to the benefit of poor children.

What are the constitutional limits of public policy? When should government simply do nothing? This trim volume does not take on these big questions. Nevertheless, it makes a worthy contribution because there is value in

The Inner Vision: Liberty and Literature, edited by Edward B. McLean. ISI Books, 200 pages, \$17

The belief that literature has been neglected in the study of political freedom has inspired this collection of seven charming essays on classic books. The highlights are George B. Martin on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, John Alvis on three of Shakespeare's Roman plays, Catherine Zuckert on *Tom Sawyer*, and Steven D. Ealy on Robert Penn Warren's *World Enough and Time* and *All the King's Men*.

Taken together, these essays show that true liberty is responsible liberty, and that freedom is achieved only in the service of the good. For the individual, this means that freedom is accomplished when reason, with spiritedness, governs the passions. To earn the public recognition he so craves, Tom Sawyer must learn to help his friends rather than outsmart them (as in the famous whitewashing scene), and by the end of the novel he has learned to act courageously. Though he thinks he wants to live licentiously, Tom discovers he's only happy when he follows his conscience.

In Shakespeare, the difference between Lucrece (whose death sets in motion the founding of the Roman republic) and Julius Caesar (whose death dooms it) is that Lucrece's soul is ordered properly. Caesar was never free within himself, and under him Rome loses its freedom as well: the connection between individual and political freedom is more than a coincidence.

Liberty requires self-knowledge (so Lear, who has "ever but slenderly known himself," is incapable of living freely) and obedience—the "filial freedom" Milton ascribes to Adam and Eve in their original state. The truly free soul, as the great works discussed here teach, recognizes a natural standard and measures itself by it.

—Kathleen Arnn

BEHIND THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE

Illiberal Justice: John Rawls vs. the American Political Tradition, by David Lewis Schaefer.
University of Missouri Press, 384 pages, \$49.95 (cloth), \$24.95 (paper)

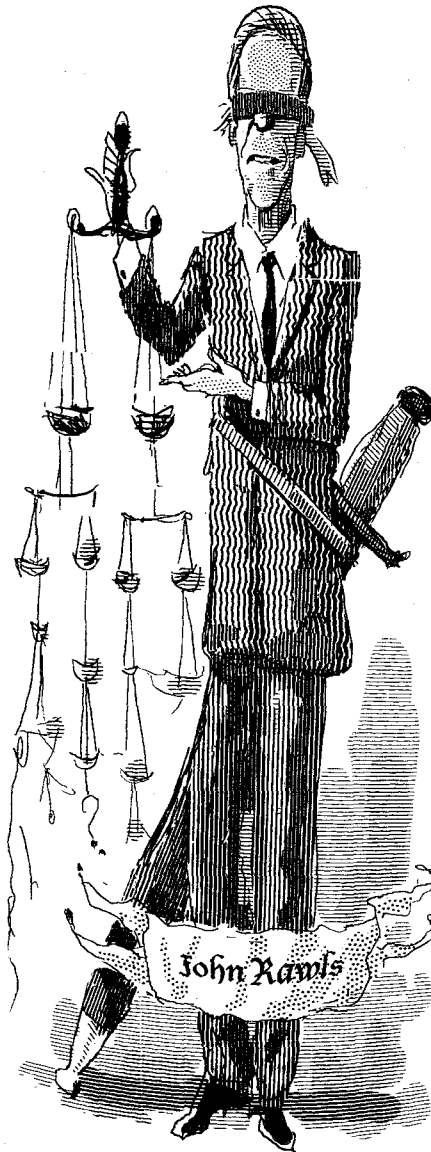
JOHN RAWLS, THE LATE HARVARD PROFESSOR who launched a thousand doctoral dissertations, still casts a giant shadow over academic philosophy. With the publication of *A Theory of Justice* in 1971, many liberal intellectuals felt that their ship had come in. After Rawls, political obligation and a progressive conception of social justice were seen as conjoined twins, incapable of separation without irreparable harm to at least one. The social contract itself now dictated a progressive—even socialist—democracy. Academic liberals had found their Archimedean, if not metaphysical, point.

When President Clinton presented Rawls with the National Humanities Medal in 1999 he noted, tellingly, that the author who gave liberty and justice a “new foundation of reason” also helped a generation of “learned Americans revive their faith in democracy itself.” At least since the 1960s, it has indeed been the learned whose faith in American liberal democracy has lagged, and it was only the learned to whom Rawls could appeal.

It is here that David Lewis Schaefer's *Illiberal Justice* adds greatly to our grasp of the destructive influence of Rawls's political theory on the understanding and practice of American republicanism. A political science professor at Holy Cross College, Schaefer skillfully and relentlessly dissects Rawls's entire *œuvre*, though he concentrates overwhelmingly on *A Theory of Justice*. One after another, Rawls's premises and conclusions are shown to be wildly implausible. The chief merit of Schaefer's work is its concentration on the relationship of Rawls to the Western and American philosophical and political traditions.

Rawls was in one sense at home with the early modern philosophers—liberal and not so liberal—for whom nature is a cruel tyrant. But the natural tyranny that Rawls sought to abolish arose not from the contest of utility-maximizing individuals pursuing preservation, power, or glory at the expense of others' lives and property. Rather, nature's defect was its offensive moral arbitrariness. As individuals, we are unequally and arbitrarily blessed, or cursed, with different natural attributes,

e.g., strength, intelligence, beauty, which in turn are reflected in the social institutions we create, thereby reinforcing and perpetuating our unmerited inequalities. In choosing our moral principles and the political institutions that flow from them, Rawls and his students desperately want us to choose otherwise than we actually do. Rawlsians seek a conception of “justice as fairness” that would prevent nature's arbitrariness from privileging some to the disadvantage of others. Starting from the premise of the choosing individual, Rawls developed a radical form of liberalism with a natural appeal to radical liberals, most of whom are denizens of the academy. His liberalism encompassed but moved beyond special pleading on behalf



of allegedly downtrodden minorities—racial, religious, sexual—to a more comprehensive pleading against almost all forms of socioeconomic inequality.

Thus a theory of justice begins with the positing of an “original position” rather than a state of nature. This position really amounts to a thought experiment wherein creatures that possess rationality and outwardly resemble human beings are imagined to have no knowledge of the facts that actual human beings would consider politically salient. In particular, these creatures have no knowledge of their personal characteristics, natural abilities, socioeconomic status, or of the good life. Behind this “veil of ignorance,” Rawls imagined these beings choosing moral and social principles according to which they would agree to live. These creatures—Rawls called them human beings—allegedly elicit an equal concern for the destiny of all, lest any one of them, when the veil is lifted, find himself possessed of attributes not to his relative advantage. Rawlsian creatures choose to maximize their own liberty only to the extent they do not undermine equal liberty for others. Furthermore, they choose to allow socioeconomic inequalities only on condition that everyone has equal opportunity and equal means to compete for positions conferring socioeconomic advantage; and only to the extent that such inequalities maximally benefit the worst off in society. Rawls called the latter stipulation the “difference principle.” Together, the principles of equal liberty and equal opportunity define the political institutions and practices that Rawls found acceptable—no discrimination, and an equal shot in life for all, no matter what. Even when nature arbitrarily bestowed “natural” gifts, these could be taken advantage of only to the extent that the difference principle allows.

BEING RISK AVERSE, RAWLSIAN CREATURES seek to maximize the minimum position of the “least advantaged” within society. Thus did Rawls borrow a concept from rational choice and game theory, albeit for the sake of a sweeping rejection of the utilitarianism usually at the heart of such theories. The principles chosen behind the veil of ignorance

reflect the exclusion of any utilitarian calculus of overall individual or social good. Yet actually Rawls simply chose different constraints on rational choice than mainstream theorists might. Individuals still choose according to utility—just not their own. For Rawls and his followers, the “right” takes precedence over the “good,” because the good is reduced to mere utility. The constraints that govern human conduct are horizontal, as they are for the early moderns, but Rawlsian right does not rest on a natural foundation; it is a series of constructs that arise only out of choices made in the original position. Rights are therefore neither instrumental nor natural. Instead, they are the conclusions of an abstract academic theory of human choice, allowing only those choices deemed desirable by sympathetic liberals. In an effort to bracket the problem of moral truth, Rawls claimed, particularly in his 1993 *Political Liberalism*, that “justice as fairness” did not need to rely on any comprehensive or metaphysical doctrines, but only on the “overlapping consensus” of various doctrines on questions of governance. To cash out this moral theory in the political realm, these overlapping liberal and socialist moral intuitions had to become *diktats* of the administrative state. Schaefer sees *Political Liberalism* as little more than “rhetorical repackaging” of the circular moral logic of *A Theory of Justice*. The only question for Rawls was who got to draw the circle.

SCHAEFER’S *ILLIBERAL JUSTICE* DEMONSTRATES the extent to which Rawls—and the analytic tradition in which he operated—was blind to the empirical, historical, and philosophical insights necessary to a meaningful consideration of justice. With Tocqueville, Schaefer vigorously defends the messy but free institutions of American self-government. He persuasively shows that dogmatic academic theories are no substitute for a deep-rooted attachment to natural rights principles and the prudential statesmanship that is sometimes needed to give them effect.

As Schaefer notes, 20th-century liberalism was in a bad way by the end of the 1960s. In so many respects triumphant, it seemed to lack a path forward because it had systematically undercut the ground on which liberal intellectuals might stand. Darwinism and pragmatism had been ruthless in their assault on the

idea of eternal verities in politics, or anywhere else. The Progressive intellectual and political movement that grew out of them dedicated itself to the growth of the administrative state, but its clamor for change seemed increasingly divorced from reliably liberal conceptions of individual rights or justice. Not coincidentally, the fact-value distinction was at the methodological heart of modern American social science from its birth at century’s turn; it mercilessly excluded the rational consideration of moral norms in a wide range of academic disciplines. Profound unhappiness with the American status quo, combined with deep moral and political skepticism, came to their logical conclusion in the 1960s with a variety of value-positing, often lawless, movements.

Thus did an otherwise obscure and obscure work of analytic political theory suddenly appear as the intellectuals’ lifeboat. Rawls at once provided a rational ground for liberalism and—in his calls for a radical distributive justice—made academic theory once again seem relevant. The Rawlsian legions could and did confidently argue for policies and judicial decisions that compensate the least advantaged and undermine traditional social institutions, such as the family, that confer “arbitrary” advantages.

As Schaefer argues, Rawls set us on the quixotic pursuit of a liberal utopia that threatens to undermine the more attainable goal of securing the equal natural rights of free citizens. Indeed, Rawls departed from Plato in believing that the rule of philosophers is not only desirable but also possible. Can we really expect individuals to view their natural abilities as a collective asset, and to consent obligingly, unendingly, to the subsidization of those who count blades of grass? Put another way, doesn’t Rawlsian liberalism eventually have to resort to an illiberal, undemocratic politics? It beggars the imagination to suggest that citizens even of Cambridge, Massachusetts might voluntarily sacrifice their interests and freedom in such a manner. This fact alone accounts for the courts being the institution of choice for so many Rawlsians who dabble in practical politics.

And indeed American lawyers and judges have proved more than willing to become the scolds and schoolmarms of our new age. Our jurists are very far from being the aristocratic brakes on democratic extremism that Tocqueville suggested they would be. It is the

courts, according to Rawls in *Political Liberalism*, that best exemplify a “public reason” that can settle political disputes on principled grounds. Schaefer suggests such a settlement promises to make politics more, not less, shrill and intolerant. For Rawls, the proper exercise of public reason points to support for *Roe v. Wade*, as well as to restrictions on the amount of speech some may engage in during election campaigns in order to enhance the relative position of others.

GIVEN THE SHEER VOLUME OF RAWLS scholarship, it should come as no surprise that much ground in this fine book has been traversed before, including by Schaefer himself in the insightful writings he has produced on Rawls over several decades. But never has the earth been tilled with such diligence. *Illiberal Justice* comes across as the author’s attempt to have the most comprehensive say on Rawls. This has its disadvantages. The book creates an effect similar to Rawls’s own work: the reader is impressed with the sense that it is rather larger than the subject matter demands. And Schaefer occasionally overreaches, as when he suggests Rawls’s war on arbitrariness was animated by the same fanatical spirit that motivates radical Islamists. Yet earlier he suggests, rather more plausibly, that Rawlsian liberalism leads to the kind of soft despotism that Tocqueville feared.

Quibbles aside, for the Rawls scholar—friend or foe—Schaefer’s book is a goldmine of insight. In the end, it conforms with Allan Bloom’s argument—and quip—that Rawls offered a first philosophy for the last man. On the most important matters, Rawls offered assertions, not arguments. What, after all, is justice? Is it fairness? Divorced by choice from the tradition of political philosophy, and mostly blind to the concrete benefits of American republicanism and a free market economy, Rawls and his many acolytes tend to see utility as the good of the Harvard professor who dwells behind a veil of ignorance that completely obscures the real world. But what can you expect of people who live so much of their lives in an academic world where mere cleverness is so valued, and so rewarded?

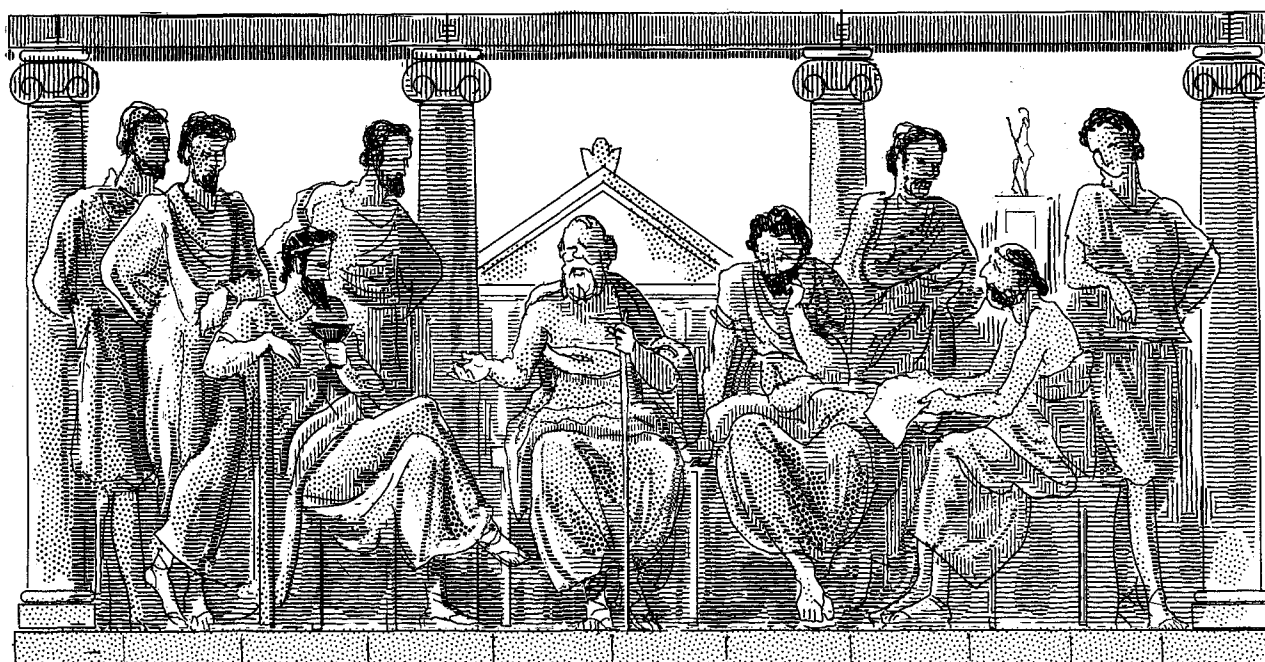
Bradley C.S. Watson is Philip M. McKenna Chair in American and Western Political Thought at Saint Vincent College, and a fellow of the Claremont Institute.

Book Review by Christopher Nadon

BACK TO THE CAVE

Republic, by Plato, translated by Joe Sachs.
Focus, 358 pages, \$14.95 (paper)

The Republic, by Plato, translated by R.E. Allen.
Yale University Press, 400 pages, \$35



“PLATO’S MOTHER’S COUSIN WAS A tyrant.” So begins the Introduction by G.R.F. Ferrari that graces Tom Griffith’s conversational translation of Plato’s *Republic* (Cambridge University Press, 2000). Nothing quite so promising emerges from the introductions to these two new efforts, but the translations that follow prove to be more accurate and useful.

With talk of “noble lies” very much in the air today, it is worth looking at the passage from the *Republic* in which Socrates first considered their use. Here is how Joe Sachs, a tutor at St. John’s College in Annapolis, renders the lead-up to Socrates’ disclosure of the content of the lie:

“Then could we come up with some contrivance,” I said, “from among the lies that come along in case of need, the ones we were talking about just now, some one noble lie told to persuade at best even the rulers themselves, but if not, the rest of the city?”

“What sort of thing?” he said.

“Nothing new,” I said, “but something Phoenician that has come into currency in many places before now, since the poets assert it and have made people be-

lieve; but it hasn’t come into currency in our time and I don’t know if it could—it would take a lot of persuading.”

What follows is Socrates’ claim that the citizens of the city must come to believe that their education happened before their birth; that they and their “brother” citizens were born from the earth; and that the division of the city into guardians, auxiliaries, and craftsmen/farmers corresponds to the different metals mixed into each individual’s soul at birth.

The passage from Sachs shows signs of his debt to Allan Bloom’s 1968 translation, which he considers “by far the most accurate available.” The ostensible occasion for offering a new one is the recent updating by S.R. Slings of John Burnet’s 1903 Oxford University Press edition of the Greek text. Yet Sachs acknowledges that for all Slings’s minor emendations, nothing of substance has been added or taken away by the revision. Thus “the mere fact that [Bloom’s translation] has held the field since 1968 is reason enough to try to discover whether a worthy alternative to it can be provided.”

Unlike Bloom, Sachs adds summaries and outlines of the argument at the beginning of each of the *Republic*’s ten books. If such intrusions

tend to diminish the immediacy of the reader’s engagement with Plato, they also serve their stated purpose of helping to keep track of a long, complicated dialogue. Sachs’s footnotes are also a double-edged sword. For the most part they provide useful cross-references to passages in the *Republic* or other Platonic texts, but on occasion they strike a false note. When Thrasymachus complains of Socrates’ irony, Sachs correctly wants to prevent the reader from confusing the term with sarcasm, and provides this gloss: “The Greek word refers only to the gracious self-deprecating way of speaking that was a specialty of Socrates.” Irony can certainly be gracious. One side of an ironic statement is often meant to keep up polite appearances. Yet the other side always remains, carrying with it the distinction between those in the know and those out of it. The ironist certainly deprecates, but his self-deprecation is always a lie. Socrates is not humble and that’s important to know.

Sachs adds another reassuring footnote in much the same vein to a passage in Book VI where Socrates claims “a multitude is incapable of being philosophic”:

Notice that Socrates is not saying that most people are incapable of philosophy,

but only that a large group of people has no such capacity when acting or thinking as one mass. Socrates would probably say that, given enough time in one-on-one discussion with someone who has begun to grasp philosophic possibilities, there would be hope for anyone.

Here Sachs sounds less like a Socratic than like a proponent of universal enlightenment.

Nonetheless, liberation from the conventional opinions of one's own time and place is precisely what Sachs claims to be the purpose of the *Republic*, and his translation facilitates this end. His treatment of the prologue to the noble lie allows the reader to connect that passage to an earlier one where Socrates maintains that "everyone would least of all stand for telling and having told a lie to the soul about the things that are, and to be ignorant and to have

and hold the lie there, and hates it most in such a case." Is the good man modeled on the good city to accept, as does the city, a lie in his soul? Is the analogy then between city and man a sound one? The contradiction in Socrates' presentation compels one to reflect. And on reflection, one must wonder whether Plato is in fact a straightforward supporter of noble lies? If so, he would seem to commit the same mistake as Thrasymachus, who, had he actually believed that justice means taking advantage of others, would have done well to make this easier by keeping his mouth shut or even filling it with conventional pieties. Plato's open insistence on the political necessity to indoctrinate with lies brings out the tension between what's good for the city and good for the individual—precisely the difficulty the lie seeks to obscure. Political life may thrive on blurring sharp distinctions, but philosophy much less so.

ROUSSEAU MAINTAINED THAT THOSE who judge books by their titles mistake Plato's *Republic* for a work about politics, when in fact it is the most beautiful treatise on education ever written. Sachs echoes Rousseau and reminds us that the genuine education Plato presents in the *Republic* is neither the indoctrination of the guardians, nor even the studied cultivation of philosopher-kings who are somehow compelled to contemplate the Forms. It is rather the education Socrates gives to Glaucon, Adeimantus, and the others who were fortunate enough to have been present that night in the Piraeus; and at yet a higher level, the education Plato gives his readers by showing us how Socrates educates.

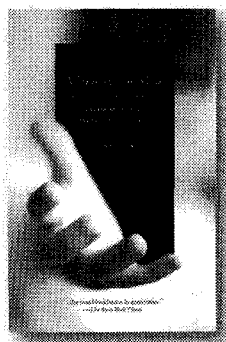
The late Reginald Edgar Allen, Emeritus Professor in Classics and Philosophy at Northwestern University, has already published translations of a sizable chunk of Plato's corpus, as well as a number of scholarly studies in Platonic metaphysics. He belongs to the school of thought that finds Plato's various accounts of his so-called Theory of Ideas contradictory and wanting, but resolves such difficulties by assigning their expressions to either the early, middle, or late Plato. His *Republic*, based on the 1903 Burnet text, maintains the high standard set by his other translations. Here is his version of the preamble to the noble lie:

How might we then devise one of those needful falsehoods we were just mentioning? I replied. A single noble and generous fiction, to persuade especially the rulers themselves, but if not, the rest of the city?

What sort of fiction? he said.

Nothing new, I replied, only a kind of Phoenician tale about something which has already happened in many places, as the poets tell and have persuaded us. But it has not happened among us, nor do I know if it could have happened. It would take a great deal of persuasion to believe.

The first thing to note is that Allen remains true to the form in which Plato casts the *Republic*, that is, as Socrates' narration to some nameless listener of a conversation he had had the previous night. He therefore dispenses with the quotation marks used by other translators to distinguish between the contributions of different interlocutors; he manages to avoid confusion by the use of paragraph breaks and indentations. One immediate benefit of this approach is to make more palpable to the reader the fact that Socrates' (to say nothing of Plato's) poetic imitation would have been banished, on stylistic grounds alone, from the city he proposes: only the unmixed imitator of the decent is welcome there, whereas in his retelling Socrates



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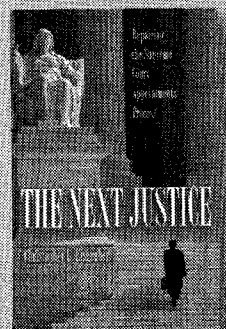
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goes so far as to imitate even the angry Thrasymachus. This observation should arrest our attention, for it is among the first of several suggestions that Plato's presentation of philosophy and philosophic education in the *Republic* is less than straightforward.

The second thing to note in Allen's translation is the way he renders Plato's *gennaïos pseudos* as "noble and generous fiction." Word for word translation between languages is of course impossible, and English lacks a precise equivalent for *gennaïos*: "well born" or "excellent for its kind" perhaps comes close. "Noble" is the traditional translation here, and Allen chooses to expand on it with the addition of "generous." (Allen is consistent in translating *gennaïon eutheian* at 348d as "a generous good nature." But in the Introduction he translates this very phrase as "a kind of noble simplemindedness or stupidity." The superiority of this rendering inclines me to consider Allen's departure from his own translation as dating from a later and more mature stage of his development.) Now the Latin *generosus* is a precise match for *gennaïos*, but, unfortunately, to render this as "generous" in English gives too much the impression that the Guardians are here being done a favor. A similar tendency is at work in Allen's choice of "fiction" for the Greek *pseudos*, a word that means quite straightforwardly "lie" or "falsehood" and lacks the element of poetic or imitative production contained in the English "fiction." It does turn out that the "excellent for its kind lie" is in fact an imaginative production modeled after what poets have made people believe in many other places. But to transform this "well born" or even "excellent" lie into a "noble and generous fiction" dulls the sharp blade of Plato's analysis. He means for the

characterization to grate and therefore provoke, for the justice in the origins of this or any other city does not bear looking into. In the sentence immediately preceding and in the earlier passage about the lie in one's soul, Allen does translate *pseudos* as "falsehood." But his accuracy in these instances only makes it more difficult for the reader to bring the passages together.

ALLEN'S DEFENSIVE TRANSLATIONS OF passages that might call into question the seriousness of Plato's immediate political intent in the *Republic* would seem to be guided by his understanding of the dialogue. Allen suspects, and rightly so, that Socrates never quite gets around to answering Glaucon's challenge to prove that justice is something good in and of itself. What Socrates offers in its place is a concrete solution for "controlling the mischiefs of faction," a problem which Allen (if not Plato) considers to be "the political problem." Indeed, according to Allen, "we may legitimately read the *Republic* as an essay in constitutional law"; and he goes on to contrast it directly with James Madison's *Federalist* #10. For Allen, the two works operate on the same plane or level of thought. Yet it would be one thing for a constitutional scholar, or even a Supreme Court justice, to speak of the Declaration of Independence as if it were a "noble lie." But had James Madison himself said this publicly, one would be compelled to question the edifice he built on that foundation. So, too, with Plato, which is just what he intends.

Faction is a serious political problem. Socrates proposes to overcome it by abolishing privacy, the family, and private property. Here is how he justifies these extreme and even ridic-

ulous measures (in Allen's translation): "Can we state any greater evil for a city than what rends it asunder and makes it many instead of one? Or a greater good than what binds it together and makes it one?" Yet not seven pages before this claim, he justified equal education for men and women on the grounds of producing excellence: "Is anything better for a city than that the best possible men and women should come to be present in it?" Well, what is best for the city, unity or excellence? Now there is a contradiction ripe for reflection, and one that cannot be dismissed or hidden from view by recourse to imagined distinctions between Plato's early, middle, and late periods of development.

Socrates may not fully meet the extreme demands Glaucon places on justice, but this does not mean their conversation is to no effect. At the beginning of the dialogue, Glaucon is full of political ambition and even tempted by the prospect of tyrannical rule. Yet when Socrates suggests in Book VII that the philosophers who have escaped from the Cave be compelled to return there and rule, Glaucon objects, "Then we'll do them an injustice?" he said. "We'll cause them to live a worse life when they're capable of better?" Glaucon could not have made this objection if he had not somehow been led by Socrates to glimpse, however inadequately, the superiority of philosophy to political life. And from the perspective of philosophy, dissent, to say nothing of faction, is hardly a vice. So, too, in the realm of translation, excellence has been well served by the current availability of several different *Republics*.

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THE BROAD GROUND OF COURAGE

Plato and the Virtue of Courage, by Linda R. Rabieh.
Johns Hopkins University Press, 224 pages, \$45

PLATO AND THE VIRTUE OF COURAGE IS an intelligent discussion of an important topic. Linda Rabieh, a lecturer in political theory at Tufts University, examines Plato's *Laches* (the dialogue he devotes to courage) and the relevant parts of the *Republic*. Serious attention to these works always is welcome, especially given our renewed concern with manliness.

Rabieh offers careful and thoughtful discussions of her texts but not line-by-line commentary. She begins with the obligatory what-do-contemporary-schools-of-thought-say-about-courage-and-why-are-they-wrong chapter. She then turns to three chapters each on the *Laches* and *Republic*, before concluding with a discussion of "the promise of courage." The most useful elements of her introduction and conclusion are a good discussion of the faults of Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* and a clear exposition of John Locke's understanding of courage. The highlights of her main chapters are a subtle grasp of what underlies the Athenian general Nicias' opinion in the *Laches* that courage is "knowledge of terrible and emboldening things" and serious reflection in her own right on the place of courage in philosophy.

The heart of Rabieh's discussion lies in the detail and complexity of her argument, which I cannot reproduce here. I will try instead to expand her analysis and thus also give some sense of its substance.

Rabieh's choice to limit herself to the *Laches* and the *Republic* is not unreasonable, but the two dialogues do not constitute "Plato on the virtue of courage." The *Protagoras* also contains a discussion of courage, which she partially describes, as does the *Statesman*, which she ignores. There are more than passing references to it in other dialogues, such as the *Laws*.

These omissions affect not just the scope of Rabieh's discussion but also her major themes. She is, for example, especially concerned about the relation between courage and happiness. The *Protagoras* suggests that courage helps define natural men who free themselves from convention and take what they want, namely, pleasure. Thinking this dialogue through would have helped her analysis of Glaucon's argument in the *Republic* that injustice is what is best for true men. Her discussion of the conversational impetus of the *Laches*—two fathers' concern about

their sons' education—does not consider that in wishing the "best" for their sons the fathers may have in mind wealth or renown, whether or not they are gained by conventional virtue. And the *Protagoras* is especially relevant for another of her themes, the relationship between courage, or virtue generally, and knowledge.

Ignoring the *Statesman* means that Rabieh does not confront what the Eleatic Stranger says there about how virtue can be one and yet have two different parts, courage and moderation. This discussion would have helped her analysis of Socrates' suggestion that Nicias' definition pertains not to courage specifically but to all virtue. Nicias may for the reasons she suggests (or others) accept the rebuke, but why



should the rest of us complain about such unexpected largesse? In the *Statesman*, courage is connected to the hard and quick, and moderation to the soft and slow. Either alone tends to harmful excess. The virtues perfect different parts of the soul, or kinds of speed and movement. The Stranger's discussion would have helped Rabieh develop elements in the *Laches* to which she gives short shrift: Socrates' reminding Nicias of animals' apparent courage; the absence of *thumos* there (and from the *Statesman*); why Socrates uses swiftness as his example to Laches of the general statement about courage he seeks from him; and the subtlety in Socrates' letting Laches know that one can be courageous while moving backward and circling in battle as well as moving forward or standing still. Rabieh does not sufficiently situate the phenomenon of courage on the broad ground that Plato prepares for it.

These two types of movement and pliancy are virtues only when they fit together in the right whole, for instance, in the right regime. Left alone each becomes extreme. Neither courage nor moderation can be the virtue each is without the other, but they are not the same. Noble risk and prudent ease can belong together in the city, although they are imperfect there because they are yoked by law and opinion. The *Statesman's* analysis thus sheds light on the connections among courage, prudence, nobility, and happiness with which Rabieh is concerned. In this regard, her discussion of philosophy would have profited from attending to the common elements of every particular philosopher's quest. In general, indeed, she does not sufficiently work through the dialectic between individual and common.

RABIEH'S INTERESTING DISCUSSION OF spiritedness in the *Republic* also is somewhat misleading. She treats it as occasioned by perceived injustice, but does not distinguish this carefully enough from spirited concern with one's own: one can become angry when one's ambition is dashed, way is blocked, or perch is threatened, even when one's rival has as just a claim, or a better one.

Rabieh also downplays the natural protectiveness of spiritedness and its connection to risk. Defending one's own (and its elevation in courage) is often more connected to happiness and less nobly self-forgetting than she would have it. Risk is involved not only in nobly facing death, or in philosophical unconventionality; it belongs to the acquisition of almost anything good. There is more necessity in courage than she lets us see. This is not, however, to deny the unusual height of noble courage.

Although I believe that attention to these texts and issues would improve Dr. Rabieh's discussion, I do not mean to detract from her book's considerable merits. It is the well-deserved winner of the inaugural Delba Winthrop Mansfield award for excellence in political science, and students of Plato and courage should read it.

Mark Blitz is the Fletcher Jones Professor of Political Philosophy at Claremont McKenna College and the author most recently of *Duty Bound: Responsibility and American Public Life* (Rowman & Littlefield).

Book Review by Eva T. H. Brann

WELCOME TO COLONUS

The Theban Plays of Sophocles, translated by David R. Slavitt.
Yale University Press, 256 pages, \$28



THIS IS THE MOST STRIPPED-DOWN version of the three Theban plays of Sophocles that I have read. As I write, I am surrounded by more than 15 translations retrieved from my shelves and the college library. David Slavitt's book is by far the shortest and the least encumbered—no introduction and no notes, though there is a spirited preface and a helpful glossary. Students are referred to electronic aids like Google and the Perseus Digital Library. The only regrettable omission is standard line numbering. Greek plays are, to my mind, best read and talked about in a group that is using various translations, a thing difficult to do without common references. But then, this translation is so compressed that the line counts wouldn't jibe. A somewhat regrettable inclusion is the translator's prefatory apology to students who are reading these plays by assignment. How many students would be reading his book, I wonder, if it hadn't been assigned? That's what student-friendly schools are for—to make people read willy-nilly what they then realize they must always have wanted to read.

This version is meant to be an updated one, and the easy currency of its diction is a great virtue. The natural cadences of its free verse slide smoothly and sometimes beautifully into the ear. Here is an example from *Oedipus at Colonus*. Sophocles is singing of his own birthplace, Colonus, and Slavitt, charmingly, can't resist injecting himself (in the phrase I've italicized):

We welcome you to Colonus, this paradise,
this country of fine horses, a poet's dream
of perfect beauty and ease where birdsong
ever
bubbles out of the ivy and down from the
leaves
of fruit trees that nod assent in a gentle
wind.

I imagine he has in his ear Shakespeare's

This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection... (*Richard II* 2.1.42-44).

Robert Fitzgerald is Slavitt's honored predecessor, and though his rhyming verse stays closer to the Greek, which Slavitt ruthlessly compresses, it is, to my ear, less supple and euphonious:

The land beloved of horsemen, fair
Colonus takes a guest;
He shall not seek another home,
For this, in all the earth and air,
Is most secure and loveliest.

In the god's untrodden vale
Where leaves and berries throng,
And wine-dark ivy climbs the bough,
The sweet, sojourning nightingale
Murmurs all day long.

No sun nor wind may enter there....

ARISTOTLE ASSERTS IN THE POETICS that plot is the prime element of "drama," which means, and is about, "doing." The Slavitt version is, indeed, tailored to bringing out the action, strong and clear. Here is my brief summary of the Theban story for those not familiar with it. *Oedipus the King* is dramatically first. For some reason Slavitt half-transliterates the Greek title, *Oidipous Tyrannos*, and calls the play *Oedipus Tyrannos*, which gives the somewhat false impression that Oedipus is a despot. *Tyrannos* here means simply "royal" or "king"—King Oedipus is the play's true title; he has a temper but he is no tyrant. It is his successor, Creon (whose very name means "master"), who conducts himself tyrannically. This first play's foreground is a murder mystery unraveled, and its background is a fateful oracle fulfilled—by Oedipus's very attempt to evade his fate, which is to kill his father and marry his mother. Oedipus has done both, and by his very care for Thebes he discovers that he is the perpetrator of the crimes that are cursing the city. The play ends with his wife-and-mother's suicide, his self-blinding, and his exile. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, after years of expiatory wandering accompanied by his daughter Antigone, Oedipus arrives in Athens, the place of resolutions. There he is protected from the pursuit of his brother-in-law Creon, now king of Thebes, by Theseus, king of Attica. He has come here to die; it is, however, no normal dying but a sacred annihila-

lation that awaits him—a mystery that sanctifies Colonus and will protect Athens. The last of the Theban plays is *Antigone*. Antigone and her retiring sister Ismene are now living in Thebes under Creon's rule. They have two brothers, one of whom, Polyneices, had raised an army and attacked Thebes to possess himself of the Theban throne; the other had stayed at home. In the battle both have died, and Creon has issued a secular edict against the invading traitor's burial. Antigone, a rebel on behalf of religious tradition and of ancient family rites, surreptitiously buries him. She is caught by Creon's police and walled up alive in a cave. By the end of the Theban story she has killed herself, as have Creon's son and wife. Creon survives, broken.

The terrific Theban drama ends with a choral comment that has, in the typical Sophoclean mode, both verbal complexity and enigmatic grandeur. Literally:

The great words
of the overproud pay back
great blows,
and teach being wise to old age.

Slavitt, distributing the choral lines to two choristers, renders this:

And never, never boast. That's dangerous.

Some of us, by the time we get to be old,
have learned at least a little.

But it's never enough.

—and has them leave “muttering unintelligibly.” It seems an ending oddly opposite to the stark Sophoclean consummation.

THE REASON IS PERHAPS THAT HE HAS placed *Antigone*, the final play dramatically, first in the book. The back-to-front order, which is that of Sophocles' composition, is meant to reinforce the fact that these dramas are each singletons, not part of a trilogy, the traditional threesome performed on one day (which Sophocles was the first to abandon). In either order the center is occupied by *Oedipus the King*, the play Aristotle regarded as

the exemplary tragedy, the play most often mentioned in his *Poetics*. Either order will cause the reader to think about the bearing of the plays on each other—about Oedipus's acceptance of his guiltless guilt and Antigone's assumption of a twisted inheritance.

Thus her play begins with this call to her sister, as beautiful in transliteration as it is bizarre in literal translation:

O koinon autadelphon Ismenes kara,
O kindred same-womb-sister, Ismene-head.

Slavitt gives this foreshortened version:

Dear sister, Ismene,....

The translations lying around me, at least one from almost every decade of the last century, all go about the same: “Ismene, dear little sister,” or “Darling sister,” or “Ismene, dear heart.” Only Francis Storr's translation, nearly a hundred years old, catches something of the terrible allusion:

Ismene, sister of my blood and heart.

For to my mind there is nothing affectionate or even comradely in her call. Slavitt has her whistle for gentle Ismene, which is like imagining a young Queen of England whistling for her sister, two fingers in the mouth. “Ismene-head” is the most formal address of tragedy; it is how Oedipus is invoked as king. Moreover, Antigone, a terrifying girl, is alluding to the fact that all four of them, the two dead brothers and the two yet living sisters, can be sure of just one thing. They have a common womb-origin; Jocasta is their birth-mother. Everything else is confusion: she is also their grandmother by being their father's mother, even as they are not merely their father's offspring but also his siblings by having the same mother. They are even, as it were, their own children by being of two generations at once. That is what *autadelphos* (*autos*: “same”; *adelphos*: “sisterly,” related to *delphus*: “womb”) signifies and what Antigone the uncompromising announces right away: the one clear thing, their sibling relationship. Since, however, translating is decisions, decisions, decisions, and since there is no way to catch

Sophocles' densities, choosing the minimalistic “Dear sister” is a sensible counsel of despair.

IT IS PART OF THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THIS version that it generally opts for normalcy. A good test is the opening of that most famous of all tragic choruses, from *Antigone*:

Many things are awesome, but none
is more awesome than man.

The word Slavitt renders as “awesome,” *deina*, can mean the terrible or terrific, the dreadful or awful, the wondrous or marvelous, the nameless or unnameable. “Awesome” seems a plain choice. But there is a “but”: my students use “Awesome!” as an exclamation when they come on something (ephemerally) fascinating to them. Sometimes the best of words have to drop out of circulation for a while.

I have misgivings, too, about using *Omoi* in the text. It is Slavitt's modification of *Oimoi*, one of at least fourteen ejaculations of distress (Michael Shaw counted them) found in Sophoclean tragedy. Slavitt renders the line:

Omoi, that curse! I may have cursed myself.

Here is what Oedipus says literally, at this turning point of his drama:

Oimoi, wretched! It seems that I have
opened myself
just now, unknowingly, to terrible curses.

The real Greek sounds too much like the “Oi weh” of my Brooklyn childhood, the modified English recalling the genteel “Oh my” of polite society, at least to my ear.

But it is easy to cavil, impossible to do better. I would be glad to give this translation to a beginner whom I wished to draw into these fearsome dramas. The preface speaks of the joy and awe of reading them. I'm uncertain of the joy—the story is just too monstrous—but in accord with the awe. This translation conveys it.

Eva T.H. Brann is a tutor at St. John's College, Annapolis, and the author of *Music of the Republic: Essays on Socrates' Conversations and Plato's Writings* (Paul Dry).

CHINA DISCOVERS THE WEST

The Dragon and the Foreign Devils: China and the World, 1100 B.C. to the Present,
by Harry G. Gelber. Walker & Co., 512 pages, \$34.95

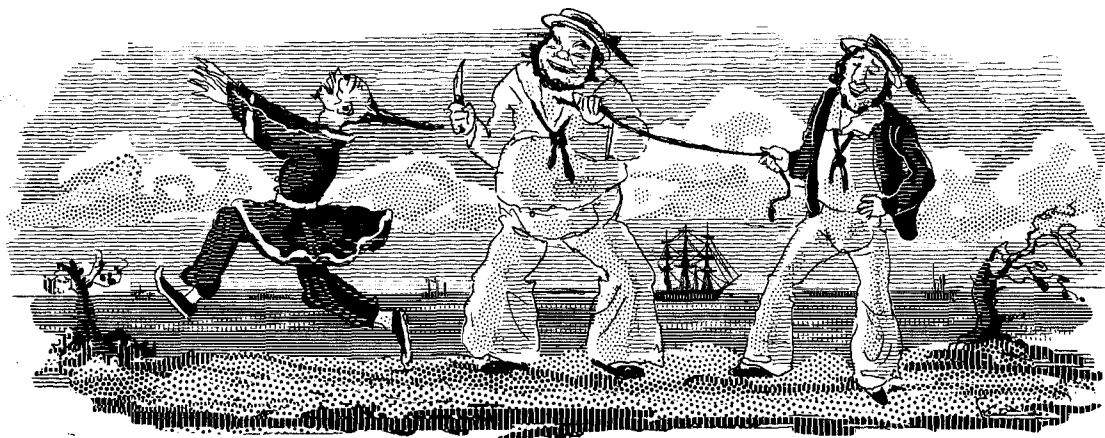


Illustration by Elliott Banfield after George Cruikshank

OCEAN TO THE EAST, MOUNTAINS TO the west, steppe to the north, jungle to the south: no wonder the ancient Chinese felt themselves to be in the middle of everything.

At the dawn of Chinese history proper, around 800 B.C., the land regions just outside the borders of the Chinese culture zone were known to be inhabited by peoples more or less distinct from one another: the Qiang, the Di, the Man, the Rong. The linguistic affiliations of these early neighbors of the Chinese, and their connections, if any, to better-known peoples of later ages, are much argued over by ethnologists. Of the world beyond these border tribes, the early Chinese said nothing, though some features of early Chinese civilization—bronze working almost certainly, pictographic writing quite possibly—had been transmitted somehow from West Asia.

Today, 2,800 years later, China is a nation among nations, with seven times the area of that ancient state and a hundred times the population. She has diplomats in every important city, her trade goods are everywhere, and schoolchildren in the West study her language. A Chinese acquaintance of mine likes to boast that there is no spot on the earth's land surface more than a hundred miles from a Chinese restaurant, and, if we exclude Antarctica, he may well be right.

The path from that ancient isolation to the present state of affairs is the subject of Harry Gelber's *The Dragon and the Foreign Devils*. A distinguished historian and author of over a dozen books, Gelber does not dwell much on the ancient and medieval world, getting us to the Ming Dynasty (A.D. 1368-1644) in just 82

pages. I personally thought this a pity, as the foreign contacts of China in the earlier period seem very fascinating to me. This is a matter of taste, though, and the author cannot fairly be faulted for his own preference. He is covering a vast topic, so selection is inevitable.

Trading relations between China and the West go back ages. Silk threads from China have been found in the Nile region, dating to around 1000 B.C. The kingdoms that Alexander left in present-day Afghanistan traded steadily with China, and even introduced Greek elements into Chinese Buddhist iconography. The Romans certainly knew of China. Horace rather optimistically includes the "Seres" with the Danubians, the Getae, and the "faithless Parthians," as a people who would not dare to break the laws of Augustus. The elder Pliny noted their standoffish nature towards foreigners: "Like savages, the Seres shun the company of others and wait for traders to seek them out." This was not always the case, though. The Chinese of that period probed westward, certainly as far as the Caspian, perhaps all the way to the Black Sea, with the purpose of policing the Silk Route.

Trade aside, some of the early cultural contacts were momentous for China. Perhaps most important, they brought Buddhism from India in the 2nd century, profoundly and permanently influencing Chinese society and thought. The Abrahamic religions came in, too, some centuries later, though their impact was much lighter. Muslim missionaries showed up in the 7th century, and were allowed to build a mosque. Nestorian Christianity (a heresy teaching that Jesus existed as both a man and as the divine Son of God, rather than as a unified person) arrived at about the same time:

Guo Ziyi, a great general of the 8th century, was likely a Christian. A Jewish synagogue was built in Kaifeng (East-Central China) in 1163, though Gelber seems to place this event much earlier.

OF PRE-MODERN CONTACTS, THE BEST-known ones from the outside world were the travels in China of the Venetian Polo family. Marco Polo's book *Description of the World* (1298) was the main source of Western knowledge of China for 200 years, in spite of the fact that Polo did not mention chopsticks, tea drinking, foot binding, or the Great Wall. Some scholars—most recently Frances Wood in her 1995 book, *Did Marco Polo Go to China?*—have doubted that Polo went to China at all. Gelber expresses somewhat milder skepticism, noting only that Polo seems to have exaggerated the position he held under China's Mongol rulers.

Of China's excursions to the world beyond, the seven voyages of the "eunuch admiral" Zheng He, between 1405 and 1433, are most famous. As Gelber notes, they were stronger on drama than real importance: "The journeys were no more than diplomatic and flag-showing exercises, in areas where the Chinese empire had no serious political or strategic interests and from which it could foresee no threats."

It was in the 16th century that Europe came to China in real numbers. The Portuguese were first, a boatload of sailors making landfall in 1513 at the mouth of the Pearl River. The Chinese authorities looked on these early arrivals as pirates and "Barbarians of the Southern Sea." By 1535, however, the Portuguese had bribed their way to a permanent settlement, and soon they

were monopolizing foreign trade in the area. Other European powers were close behind. In 1596 Elizabeth I of England wrote a letter, in her excellent Latin, to the Chinese emperor. (He did not respond.) Along with traders came the Cross: the Jesuits soon established themselves—Matteo Ricci in 1583 and Adam Schall in 1622 being the best known. China's modern engagement with the West was under way.

The Ming dynasty was at this point on its last legs. In 1644 it was swept away by Manchus, a Siberian people from beyond the Great Wall to the northeast. This was just as the Russians were beginning to settle Siberia in real numbers—50,000 by the end of the 1650s, the author tells us. In a particularly interesting chapter, "Manchus and Russians," Gelber gives a detailed account of the Russian and Chinese maneuverings that ended with the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk, "which largely regulated Russo-Chinese relations for the next century and a half." In the longer perspective of history, this was not so much an end as a beginning—the beginning of the violent and tangled modern history of northeast Asia, where still today China, Korea, Japan, and Russia glare uneasily at each other across gray seas and frigid mountain ranges.

By 1700 Europeans and Chinese were beginning to form clear images of each other. The images were oddly asymmetrical. European thinkers were well-disposed towards China, admiring the meritocratic system of imperial examinations and the civic morality of Confucianism. The Chinese, by contrast, had still not begun to take Europeans as anything other than "outer barbarians."

As the 18th century advanced, European attitudes became more ambivalent. The Chinese decorative arts enjoyed their first vogue ("chinoiserie"), and Voltaire was still, in the 1760s, burling that Chinese religion and morality were "wise, august, free from all superstition and all barbarity." Closer acquaintance with China had raised doubts in many, though. The visit of British Commodore George Anson in 1743 was a turning point. Anson was ill-treated by the Chinese. He was scathing about them in the account he wrote of his voyage, published in 1748: "in artifice, falsehood and an attachment to all kinds of lucre, many of the Chinese are difficult to be paralleled by any other people." Anson's book was widely read and influenced the ideas of many mid-century European intellectuals—Montesquieu, for example, who dismissed China as a despotism ruled by fear. Anson was also contemptuous of China's military power. This was of no small importance,

given the rising confidence of Europeans, and especially of the British, who were consolidating their position in India.

This period of increasing European ambivalence about China, and continuing Chinese condescension to Europe, culminated in the 1793 embassy of Britain's Lord Macartney to request more liberal trading and diplomatic relations from the 82-year-old Chinese emperor. The mission was a failure, though not, as is commonly believed, only because Macartney refused to perform the kowtow. The Chinese were simply unwilling to take a European nation seriously, or to amend even slightly their customary ways of dealing with outsiders. Macartney, for his part, made some shrewd observations about the cracks beginning to open up in Manchu rule—the "tyranny of a handful of Tartars over more than 300 million of Chinese."

BY THE TIME THE LONG WARS AGAINST Napoleon were over and European powers could again direct their attention to China, the decay of the Manchu dynasty was correspondingly further advanced. The Opium War of 1840-43 was the first of the great humiliations inflicted on China by foreign powers in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Chinese are still in denial about that war today, insisting that the sole cause of it was British determination to force opium on an unwilling China. Certainly the British were glad to meet China's great demand for opium. Why not? The drug was legal in Britain itself, and could be purchased over the counter from apothecaries until the 1868 Pharmacy Act. The true cause of the war was again, as John Quincy Adams noted at the time, the refusal of the imperial court to deal with foreign nations on rational terms.

Thus imperial China's long death agony began. In 1856-60 there was a second war with Britain, France fighting on Britain's side. The emperor's Summer Palace outside Peking was burned to the ground. ("To punish the court while sparing the people," explained Lord Elgin—a remark you will not see reproduced in any Chinese account of the incident. A victorious Chinese general in Elgin's position would have burned Peking.)

Soon a new power joined in the looting and humiliation of China. After the Meiji Restoration of 1867, Japan industrialized rapidly. In 1894-95 she fought a short, decisive war with China over Korean independence. In the ensuing treaty, the Japanese acquired key portions of Chinese territory, including Taiwan.

The stage was then set for China's protracted struggle, throughout the 20th century, to come to terms with modern ways of thinking and behaving. Gelber gives full coverage, taking the consensus position—which in this context seems invariably to mean the Chinese Communist Party's position—on murky episodes like the 1937 Marco Polo Bridge incident, which sparked the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the 1971 Lin Biao plot, when Mao Zedong's heir apparent mysteriously disappeared.

IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR THAT THE STRUGGLE is over yet. In a thoughtful concluding chapter, Gelber warns us against being dazzled by China's economic success, and by the view, slipping into vogue once again, that history is driven by economics.

It is a view that is full of peril if it ignores the forces of politics and psychology, of pride and ambition, insecurity and fear, of jealousy, of national and group identity and cohesion, which have, in the end, usually been dominant in the affairs of states.

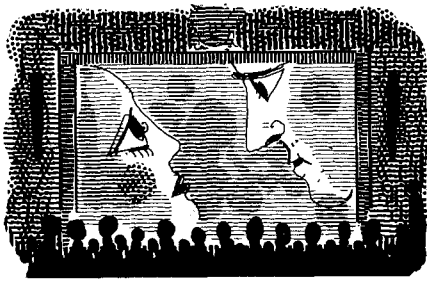
Those are wise words. Gelber has made a good, compelling narrative of this long and complex story, punctuated by a page or two of boxed text now and then to explain some key topic. There is an excellent selection of photographs, a useful bibliography, and some essential maps. If the book has a defect, it is a carelessness with Chinese words and names. The first Han emperor, whose reign title is spelled "Gaozu" in pinyin, "Kao Tsu" in Wade-Giles transcription, appears here as "Gao Su" on page 21, then, fifty pages later, as "Gauzu." The author seems to think that the Tubo, who were the ancestors of modern Tibetans, and the Tuoba, an Altaic tribe who ran a north Chinese dynasty in A.D. 386-534, are the same people. A handful of other solecisms of this kind are scattered through the text.

These minor blemishes aside, I think Harry Gelber has successfully done what he set out to do, as described in his introduction. He has shown us "the ebb and flow of other states' and societies' interest, in the context of their own policies and outlook, in China, as well as of China's interest or lack of interest in them."

John Derbyshire is a writer living in New York, and the author most recently of *Unknown Quantity: A Real And Imaginary History of Algebra* (Joseph Henry Press).

SHADOW PLAY

by Martha Bayles



Out of Focus

THIS YEAR'S ACADEMY AWARDS WERE swept by a film, *The Departed*, which is set in Boston but based on another film set in Hong Kong. When mentioning that Martin Scorsese's winning film was a remake, the presenter described the original, *Infernal Affairs* (2002), as having been made in Japan, not Hong Kong. This error was soon corrected, but it fits into a larger pattern. Amid the brouhaha over *The Departed* (for which Scorsese won his first Best Director award), few serious comparisons have been made with *Infernal Affairs*. This is regrettable, because the relationship between the two is summed up by a comment Samuel Johnson is said to have made to an aspiring writer: "Your manuscript is both good and original, but the part that is good is not original and the part that is original is not good."

What is good about *The Departed*? First, the plot, which is taken directly from *Infernal Affairs* (directed by Alan Mak and Andrew Lau, written by Mak and Felix Chong). Two police cadets go undercover, one posing as a gangster while reporting to the cops, the other posing as a cop while reporting to the gangsters. Time passes, and their fates become entwined as each is assigned to track down the other. Finally, each suffers a crisis of conscience, not to say identity, as the line between good and evil becomes blurred.

The Departed also contains some good acting, especially from Leonardo DiCaprio as Billy, the scruffy, soulful police mole; and Matt Damon as Colin, the smooth, handsome gangster mole. In *Infernal Affairs*, these parts are played by two Hong Kong stars: the smoldering Tony Leung as Chan, the police mole; and the elegant Andy Lau as Lau, a mole in the "triad" (the Hong Kong term for gang). Equally important are the older actors who serve as mentors to the moles. In *Infernal Affairs*, the mentor to Chan is Superintendent Wong, played by the gifted Anglo-Chinese actor Anthony Wong. And overseeing Lau is the triad boss, Sam, played by the cherubic Eric Tsang in a brilliant blend of the comic and the tragic.

In *The Departed*, these roles are taken by two Hollywood heavyweights: Martin Sheen as police Captain Queenan, and Jack Nicholson as mafioso Frank Costello. But here the films diverge in a way distinctly unflattering to Martin Scorsese. Because the plot is about moral compromise and ambiguity, it's important to lay down markers showing where the gray stops and the black-and-white begins. In *Infernal Affairs*, these markers are most clearly laid down in the subtle, intelligent portrayal of the two senior men who send their juniors into dubious battle. These characters proved so compelling to the audience that they were placed at the center of *Infernal Affairs II*, the second film in what became a trilogy.

Wong and Sam first come into their own in a scene in *Infernal Affairs* where Sam has been brought in for questioning. Because Wong lacks the evidence to press charges, Sam is sitting at a table in the central police station, calmly scarfing down some tasty-looking takeout as though he hasn't a care in the world. With a dozen or so triad members and police (including the two moles) looking on, Sam grins at Wong and expresses his relief that, so far, the food does not appear to be poisoned. Wong smiles benevolently: "There's always dessert." The two men then spar about who will be first to unearth the other's mole. Wong tells a story about two kidney patients, each in need of a transplant, who enter into a contest to see who will get the single kidney available. Each selects a playing card and places it in the other's pocket, and the first to guess the card in his own pocket wins. Sam and Wong needle each other about this until Sam loses his cool, jumping up and sweeping the takeout off the table. This is significant, because while both mentor figures demonstrate self-discipline, the good guy, Wong, demonstrates more.

There is no such scene in *The Departed*, probably because self-control is not a big item with Scorsese. His mentors are lazy caricatures who inhabit a moral universe too muddled to admit either compromise or ambiguity. We are told

that Captain Queenan, the good guy, is a pious Catholic and upstanding cop. But the character we see has about as much grit and flavor as tap water. The bad guy, Costello, resembles the water at the other end of the sewage system. Costello's true nature is also revealed while he is eating. But rather than lose control the way Sam does, Costello shows none to begin with. Half-gobbling, half-spitting a boiled lobster, he brandishes a plastic bag containing a freshly severed human hand. Then, in a shot that deliberately mixes the red of the blood with that of the lobster (suggesting that perhaps he might make a meal of both), he yanks off the dead man's ring and tosses it to his sidekick: "Send this to his wife." The sidekick delivers the sort of line that now passes for wit in Hollywood: "Thought it was nice the way you asked him which hand he jerked off with."

Flight from Repression

THE REPULSIVE COSTELLO IS PORTRAYED with such zest that it's hard to know where the filmmakers' sympathies truly lie. William Monahan is the sort of scriptwriter who would be lost without the f-word; and Nicholson no longer seems to care how deeply his image sinks in trendy muck. The real culprit, though, is Scorsese's neurotic relationship to the working-class Catholicism of his youth. The delicate, high-strung son of Sicilian parents in New York, Scorsese attended parochial schools and at the age of 14 enrolled at Cathedral College, the archdiocesan seminary. In interviews, he often refers to himself as "a former seminarian" who was "expelled" because of uncontrollable sexual urges. "I discovered girls," he says, "and started dreaming."

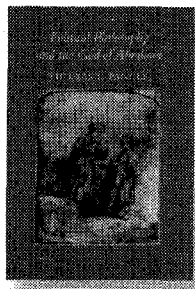
According to other reports, though, it was less libido than bad grades that drove young Marty to Cardinal Hayes High School and thence to New York University Film School, where he found his vocation with the respected Haig Manoogian. At any rate, Scorsese

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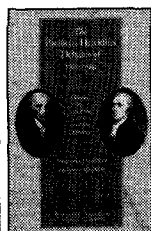
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frequently quotes the epigraph (from John Ruskin) of Manoogian's classic 1966 text, *The Film-Maker's Art*: "The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something clearly, and tell what it saw in a plain way." It is admirable that Scorsese should remain loyal to his old professor. But it is ironic that he should cite this passage, because there are two things this celebrated director has never done well: see clearly and tell plainly.

From the beginning, Scorsese's films have favored characters who are "passionate," quick to anger and lust, not "repressed" in the manner of the Irish nuns and priests he knew as a boy. A good example would be Johnny-Boy in *Mean Streets* (played by Robert De Niro in his first major role). He is selfish, impulsive, but somehow charismatic—annoying, but not disgusting. Yet over time, Scorsese's flight from Catholic repression has driven him ever deeper into ugly realms of perversity and violence, as though these were the only authentic human experiences. Catholic film buffs have struggled to wring messages of redemption out of *Mean Streets* (1973), *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Raging Bull* (1980), and *Goodfellas* (1990). But these efforts are not convincing, because what these films offer is a tour through hell—and a shallow hell at that, because Scorsese lacks the ability to evoke real suffering, or indeed any strong emotion, with the possible exception of anger. A striking contrast with this affectless style can be seen in *A Bronx Tale* (1993), based on the play by Chazz Palminteri and directed by De Niro. Without indulging in sentiment, this film treats the same milieu as Scorsese's films in a way that restores the missing ingredients: love, hatred, loyalty, power, healthy eroticism, forgiveness, and grace.

Utter Viciousness

AFFECTLESS ART CAN SUCCEED IF IT'S combined with cold analysis. Scorsese has sometimes achieved this result, but to do so he needs a first-rate writer like Paul Schrader. Unfortunately, Monahan is not even second-rate. His take on working-class Catholicism consists of unrelieved nastiness. The child abuse scandals, first uncovered in Boston, are seized upon with relish in a scene in which Costello self-righteously insults two priests and a nun. Yet this self-righteousness ill comports with the opening scene, where Costello is shown leering at the young daughter of a storekeeper while extorting money from her terrified father. At first the girl shrinks from him in disgust, but then he whispers something in her ear, and she smiles. It's a small moment, and meant to be a revealing one. But if a creep like Costello can find words to elicit a smile from

a girl he has just been humiliating, we need to know what those words are. To hide them in a whisper is to cheat.

One could argue, I suppose, that because the greatest sin is hypocrisy, we should admire Costello for his honest wickedness. The moral integrity of the gangster is an old theme in Hollywood movies, especially those sophisticated enough to recall the mafia's presumed roots in resistance to feudal landlords in Sicily. Paul Rahe has written eloquently about how *The Godfather* (novel by Mario Puzo, film by Francis Ford Coppola) dramatizes the contrast between the "politics of friendship," as practiced by pre-modern societies going back to Rome, and the "politics of distrust," as embodied in the founding of the United States as a "modern republic."

But can this be applied to *The Departed*? Costello's only integrity is his utter viciousness, and even that is compromised by the revelation, made in passing and with no discernible dramatic consequences, that he is "a paid FBI informant." Costello has integrity only if we are prepared to accept viciousness as a form of protest against tyranny. But then we must ask: What tyranny? What sort of city is Boston? Is the Commonwealth of Massachusetts such an unjust system that a scumbag like Costello represents a more honorable alternative?

If Monahan ever took a break from the labor of typing four-letter words to ponder such questions, his script doesn't show it. *The Departed* opens with Costello delivering a pop-existentialist monologue over footage of the riots that convulsed Boston in 1974, after a federal court ordered the busing of black students into working-class white neighborhoods to integrate the schools. One minute we hear a black eyewitness say of the white rioters, "I dunno, they put hate in your heart." The next, we hear Costello knock "the niggers" and "black chappies" for not realizing that "No one gives it to you, you have to take it." Is this relevant? Does the memory of Boston's busing crisis justify extortion, drug-dealing, murder, and cannibalistic table manners? If Monahan is playing the race card here, he needs to turn it face up so the audience can see what it means.

Political Realities

BOSTON HAS ITS PROBLEMS, BUT WHEN it comes to basic issues of political legitimacy and the use of force, Hong Kong is in a different category altogether. Last I checked, Boston is still part of the United States, and it has not experienced anything like Hong Kong's 1997 handover from Great Britain to the People's Republic of China (PRC). It is typical of Hollywood to be oblivious of such foreign political realities; don't forget, it was a

decorative border

presenter at the Oscars who confused Hong Kong with Japan. But there is nothing oblivious about *Infernal Affairs*. It's not a political movie; it's a cool, stylish thriller. But its central premise—that serving two masters is bad for the soul—resonates powerfully with the atmosphere of unease surrounding the handover.

The handover occurred amid promises that civil liberties would be preserved and democracy extended under the “One Country, Two Systems” touted by the PRC. But as many observers noted during the tenth anniversary this July, the future of both liberty and democracy in Hong Kong is far from assured. For example, during President Hu Jintao's visit on July 1, he made it clear that while the new chief executive, Donald Tsang, is much more competent and savvy than his predecessor, Tung Chee-Hwa, he would be no less beholden to pro-Beijing elements within the political establishment. And that establishment has hardly become more democratic. In 2003 the mainland government tried to impose strict security controls, bringing half a million protestors into the streets. Beijing backed off, but in 2004, its high court reinterpreted the Basic Law (Hong Kong's post-handover constitution) to block further extension of the franchise. And meanwhile, all but two of the major media companies in Hong Kong are so keen to curry favor with the capital, they avoid anything resembling critical journalism.

Viewed through this lens, *Infernal Affairs* becomes even more fascinating—especially the second film, which deals with the struggle of one triad family, the Ngais, to survive the handover. Do Hong Kong filmmakers identify with the triads? This may seem a stretch, but not if

you consider Sam's rise to the top in *Infernal Affairs II*. The film opens in 1991, when Sam is still on the Ngai family payroll but friendly enough with Superintendent Wong that the latter tries to enlist him in eliminating the senior head of the family. This part of the plot has too many twists and turns to describe here, but the overall drift is clear: Sam ends up on top because he is the toughest, wiliest, best connected guy in the business. Not only does he get the better of the Ngai family, but he outwits the police, and until the very end manages to stay one jump ahead of some shady but useful friends from Thailand.

At the end of *Infernal Affairs II*, we see Sam alone on the eve of the handover, mourning his dead wife and brooding over the murders of the entire Ngai family carried out by his Thai friends in defiance of his wishes. To his objection that killing the whole family went much too far, his Thai partner replies that in this new era, “there is no such thing as going too far.”

Here arises a weighty question: if you were a major player in the East Asian drug trade, willing to murder and bribe your way to power, which regime would you prefer to deal with, the one that flies the Union Jack, or the one that flies the hammer and sickle? Sam clearly prefers the former, but the cold, ruthless head of the Ngai family (played by Francis Ng) prefers the latter. Indeed, Ngai's ambitions reach further. On the eve of the handover, he is invited to a fancy dinner for “political consultative candidates” hosted by “Director Chen,” a smiling power broker from the mainland. “If this works out,” Ngai comments before the event, “our family will no longer have to live in the shadows.”

It does not work out, because just as Ngai is making a favorable impression on Director

Chen, Wong and his fellow officers run up the carpeted stairs of the Jumbo Floating Restaurant, where the dinner is taking place. Striding into the crowded reception area, Wong announces in a clear voice and with a faint but discernible air of defiance that he has a warrant for Ngai's arrest, that the charge is murder, and that anything Ngai says will be recorded and could be used against him in a court of law. If you don't know the historical background, this scene will slip right by you. But if you do know it, Wong's richly comic—and tragic—assertion of key civil liberties in the face of Hong Kong's new masters will stick in your mind as one of the great political moments in the history of cinema.

Seen on a map, Hong Kong and Boston appear similar: coastlines like a half-finished jigsaw puzzle, with so many bays, inlets, peninsulas, and islands that only God could memorize the whole footprint. Seen at sea level, though, the two cities differ dramatically: Hong Kong soars upward, both naturally and architecturally, while Boston lolls gently on low hills, barely summoning the energy for a downtown skyline. I'm not knocking Boston—after all, my roots there go back as far as possible without being Algonquin. But let's face it: compared to Hong Kong, Boston is a backwater. Still, my hometown deserves better than the execrable treatment it gets in *The Departed*. If only someone in Hollywood could express the same tough love for an American city that Lau, Mak, and Chong express for Hong Kong, then what passes for original might also be good.

Martha Bayles, who teaches humanities at Boston College, is the CRB's columnist on television and film.

PARTHIAN SHOT

by Mark Helprin



A Rare Alignment

POLITICAL INITIATIVES IN THE MIDDLE EAST ARE CURSED WITH a failure rate so high that it is understandable for analysts sometimes to use the odds as a substitute for craft. After Anwar Sadat's spectacular trip to Jerusalem in November of 1977, the press, mistaking cynicism for wisdom, was skeptical. After all, in the first 25 years of its existence, Israel had had to fight Egypt four times. But the past was no guide to the future, for in the 34 years since, the peace of Begin and Sadat has been unbroken.

At the time, educated opinion was attentive to the vicissitudes of negotiation rather than to the structural imperatives that would eventually prevail. Nearly bankrupt, its population swelling, divorced from the Soviets, irrelevant to the Third World, and having reclaimed its honor by partial success in the October War, Egypt was predictable, as were its rivals, a front of radical Arab states and the Palestinians. Knowing their interests and set upon their course, Israel and Egypt formed, as it were, the innermost of three concentric circles. Surrounding them was a second circle, the rejectionists, who were divided, militarily weak, geographically separated, and economically impotent. Except for the Soviet Bloc, which did not have the agility to make up for its lack of position, the major powers that formed the outer circle were overwhelmingly in favor of rapprochement, and used their weight to break the rejectionists upon the anvil formed by the principals. A similar metaphysics has now emerged.

The United States has fought the war in Iraq as if history, strategy, maneuver, preparation, foresight, and common sense did not exist. Nonetheless, the impact of the war has been to shatter the politics of the region and create new opportunities, one of which is the potential for a settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. Some quarters of government, burnt by the predictable failure of the current administration to transform the political culture of the Middle East into that of a Vermont town meeting, are pessimistic by analogy. But the analogy is invalid. The conditions are not the same, the task is different, and, unlike the United States, Israel has no timetable for withdrawal from the region—as its enemies well know.

As America blunts its sword in Iraq it has relieved Iran of much anxiety in regard to its own vulnerabilities, set up a predominantly Shiite state in Baghdad, and made the Arab world more receptive to Iranian views. The Shia ascendancy comprises a resurgent though weak Iran, a Shiite Iraqi state in critical condition, a Shiite rump in Lebanon chastened by the war it "won" a year ago (with such a victory, defeat is unnecessary), and the alignment with Iran of Syria and Sunni radicals such as Hamas.

Contrary to the received wisdom, last summer Hezbollah overplayed its hand. Israel emerged shaken but with few casualties and an economy that actually grew during hostilities. The vaunted Hezbollah Katyushas had a 1% kill rate, with not one launched in the year thereafter. Israel showed that upon provocation it could and would destroy anything in its path, thus creating a Lebanese awakening that has split the country and kept Hezbollah fully absorbed. Though Hezbollah is rearming, it remains shy of Israel.

Hamas, too, has overplayed its hand, providing the opening from which a Palestinian-Israeli peace may emerge. For the first time since 1948, a fundamental division among the Palestinians presents conditions in which the less absolutist view may shelter and take hold. Mahmoud Abbas is weak

in many ways, but he has decisively isolated the radical tendencies. Hamas loyalists in the West Bank (according to the latest polling, less than 25%) face a different demographic in a different economy that can be richly watered if Israel is wise enough to do so. Surrounded and interpenetrated by the Israeli army and Palestinian Authority forces now strengthened by Israel and the West, Hamas is not what it once was.

In economically besieged Gaza, Hamas is corralled by Israel, Egypt, and the sea, its apparent strength exaggerated by the fact that Abbas did not choose to fight on this battlefield but rather to profit by its loss, much as did King Hussein in regard to the West Bank. The starving and oppressed Palestinians who watch Hamas fire rockets the chief effect of which is to summon Israeli tanks, may soon see a prosperous West Bank at the brink of statehood and at peace with its neighbors and the world. The quarantine of Gaza will cast a bright light upon the normalization of the West Bank. And although Hamas portrays Abbas as a collaborator, it is they who may be held to account for keeping more than a million of their own people hostage to a gratuitous preference for struggle over success.

THE SUDDEN AND INTENSE COMMONALITY OF INTEREST BETWEEN the Palestinian Authority and Israel is the equivalent of the Israeli-Egyptian "anvil" of 1977. But unlike 1977, the Arabs, in the second circle, have largely reversed position. Fearful of Iran, they are rushing to bend the rejectionists against the anvil. They have so much to contend with at home and in the east that they cannot afford an active front in their midst, and are therefore forming ranks against Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas.

We are at the potential beginnings of a rare alignment of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the leading Arab nations, and the major powers. Though it is true that one of Russia's chief interests is to keep the Middle East roiled so as to preserve the high oil prices that are now Russia's life blood, when the region moved from Soviet to Western arms Moscow was relegated to the periphery. Though Europe is militarily paralyzed it wields great economic incentives, and though the United States has not done very well of late, its powers remain preeminent and its will constructive.

The principals, the important Arab states, and the international community are arrayed against a radical terrorist front that, unlike in Iraq, is geographically fractured, relatively contained, terribly poor, and very much outnumbered. Anything for the worse can happen in the Arab-Israeli conflict and usually does, but now the chief pillars of rejectionist policy lie flat, and the spectrum of positions is such that each constructively engaged party can accommodate the others.

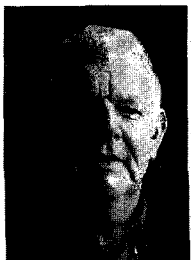
In the heat of a failing war, historical processes have unfrozen. If the principals pursue a strategy of limited aims, concentrating on bilateral agreements rather than a single work of fallible grandeur, they may accomplish something on the scale of Sadat's extraordinary *démarche* of 30 years ago. The odds are perhaps the best they have been since then, and responsible governments should recognize them as the spur for appropriate action and risk.

A version of this essay appeared in the New York Times.



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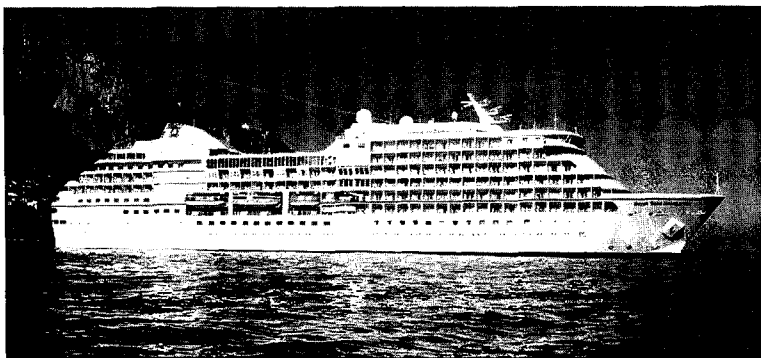
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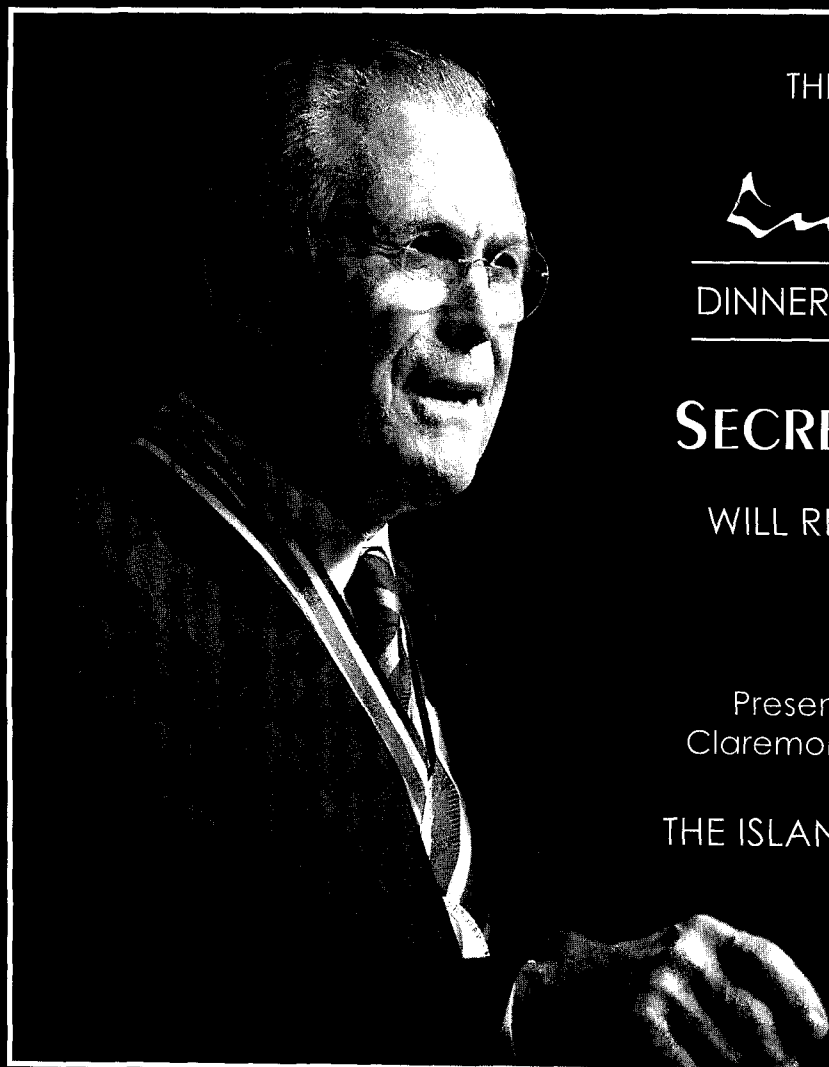
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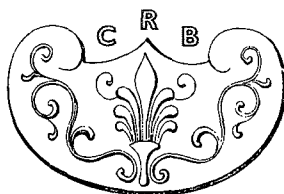
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nations. If statesmen can point
to people or things whose
absence would do good,
armies can kill or destroy
them. But the most unnatural
thing you can ever do with or
to any army is to turn it from
combat to occupation.

Angelo M. Codevilla
"American Statecraft
and the Iraq War"



IN THIS ISSUE

REAGAN WAS ELECTED
president 25 years after the first
issue of *National Review* declared its
intention to "stand athwart history,
yelling Stop." This was an amazing
ascent for a political movement that
started out, in the words of NR's
first editorial, "superfluous" and "out
of place." In the 25 years since
Reagan's election, however,
conservatives determined to scale
back the welfare state might as well
have been standing a respectful
distance behind history, whispering
"please slow down."

William Voegeli
"The Trouble with
Limited Government"

AT 43, EDITH
Wharton published her first
novel, *The House of Mirth*. It
was a bestseller, establishing
her as one of the country's
foremost novelists. Her
family did not welcome the
news of her success. In their
milieu, novelists were as
déclassé as tradesmen, and
the family never read or even
implied any awareness of her
work. Her husband was
slightly more supportive:
"Look at that small waist," he
bragged. "You'd never think
she wrote a line of poetry."

Cheryl Miller
"The Genius of
Old New York"

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